

# Community Conservation and Enhancement

## Introduction

This chapter focuses on sustaining or renewing the qualities that make the County's communities attractive and livable, enhancing amenities within specific areas and helping to give each community a strong local identity.

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### ***Vision 4:***

*Our communities will be livable, safe  
and distinctive.*

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Since the 1960s, much of Howard County's planning and budgeting, as well as the attention of citizen groups, has been focused on growth. As residential growth slows over the next two decades, the County will have an increasing proportion of older homes, commercial centers and employment sites. The County needs to ensure that these remain high quality places to live and work. The General Plan must lay the groundwork for future efforts to enhance, stabilize and revitalize the County's existing communities and to improve the quality of new development. To achieve Vision 4 for the County's communities, several goals must be pursued:

**Form sustainable communities.** The concepts and goals of sustainable development, described in more detail in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, can guide efforts to nurture communities where the natural environment is biologically healthy, the social environment is supportive and the economy is vigorous (Box 1-1, as shown previously).

**Develop attractive, identifiable communities.** Design requirements for new development, including landscape and open space standards, need to be refined to improve design quality. In addition, existing communities will benefit from specific enhancements that improve public areas and the natural environment.

**Revitalize older communities.** Older communities must not be allowed to deteriorate. Many of the County's older communities are attractive, well-maintained and healthy. Where problems exist, it is important to address them before they become entrenched.

**Develop infill sites carefully.** As undeveloped land becomes scarce, more of the available residential land is located on infill sites. Because many of these infill sites have environmental and other constraints, particular attention must be paid to the regulations that govern their development to ensure that the new development will be an asset to the adjacent neighborhoods.

**Reinforce commercial, employment and civic centers.** Major centers – the County seat in Ellicott City and Downtown Columbia – and smaller centers that serve as focal points for surrounding communities and neighborhoods can be a source of community identity.

**Enhance communities through public facilities and services.** Public facilities that are well-maintained and services that provide for current community needs can help maintain a high quality of life and encourage continued private investment in a community.

**Develop an effective community planning program.** Translating the goal of a high quality of life into strong local communities requires more detailed planning than can be done at the General Plan scale. Active, sustained involvement by residents, businesses and organizations is essential for effective community planning and implementation.

## State Planning Mandates

The themes of community conservation and enhancement are strongly reinforced by the 1997 Smart Growth and Neighborhood Conservation Act,

which includes several components to strengthen, stabilize and revitalize existing neighborhoods. The 1992 Planning Act also requires that County plans encourage regulatory streamlining, innovation and flexibility. The policies of this chapter recognize the need for innovation and flexibility in addressing infill development, redevelopment and revitalization.

## Community Structure and Focus

Communities are social entities. Their vitality and cohesion stem primarily from the ways in which neighbors join together to promote their common interests and share in the effort to sustain a healthy social and physical environment. The physical environment alone cannot create such relationships, but a poor physical setting can diminish opportunities for social contacts and fail to create a strong sense of belonging to a specific place.

### Community Structure

Communities have many components – housing, stores and services, streets, pathways and sidewalks, natural areas, recreation facilities and public or civic buildings, such as schools, places of worship, libraries, fire stations and community centers. Many communities are a blend of modern and historic components, while others date from a single time period.

**Box 5-1** outlines five key concepts that are central to planning for Howard County's neighborhoods and communities. Most of this chapter discusses the individual concepts that together organize our communities. **Maps 5-1 and 5-2** depict the places – neighborhoods, communities and areas – that shape the County. Numerous opportunities can be found to introduce or strengthen these concepts in the County's communities, whether through design of new subdivisions or plans for improving or restoring portions of existing neighborhoods. As the County approaches build-out and its old and new neighborhoods become more tightly interwoven, these concepts can help unify the County's communities.

## Community Focus

One of the basic concepts of communities, identified in [Box 5-1](#), is nodes or focal points, recognizable gathering places or landmarks that reinforce identity and community pride. In the 1990 General Plan, a major emphasis of the Community Enhancement Chapter was the need for active community centers that would provide a local focus. The lack of active local community centers is one of the main ingredients missing from most suburban environments. The village center system which helps structure Columbia provides many of these functions, but most areas outside Columbia lack a strong local focus.

The suburban land use practice of separating land uses is largely responsi-

ble for the lack of multipurpose community centers with active public spaces where people can meet and interact. In this respect, suburbs are quite different from traditional small towns where Main Street was a social and civic environment as much as the commercial core of a community. In the suburbs, many of the institutions, civic functions and community services that would also be part of traditional small town commercial centers are scattered on their own sites, perhaps miles away from the shopping district.

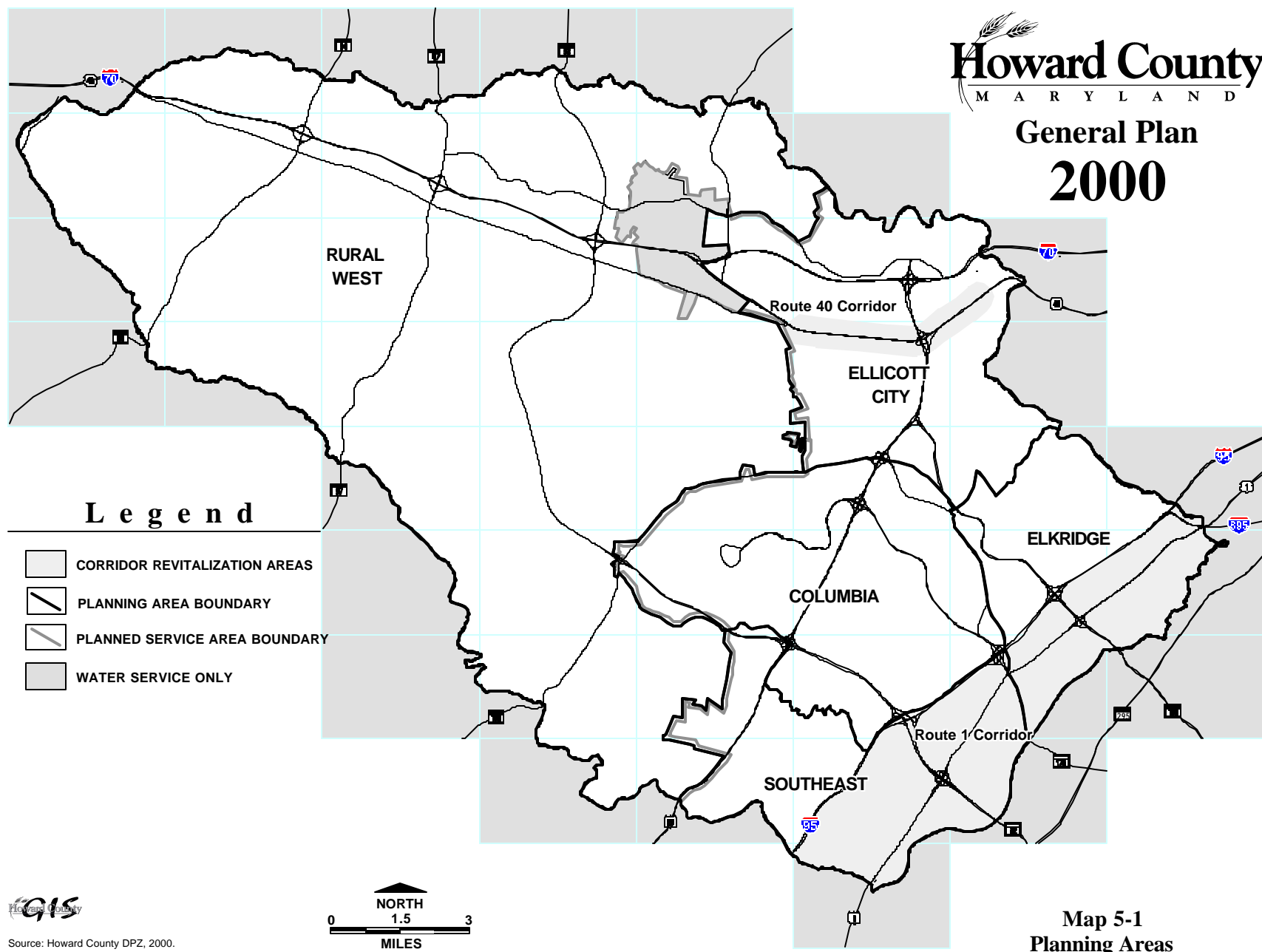
Community focus can be provided by an attractive center that combines stores, services, civic uses and green space. This General Plan recognizes that other amenities can also provide a focal point. A small park may pro-

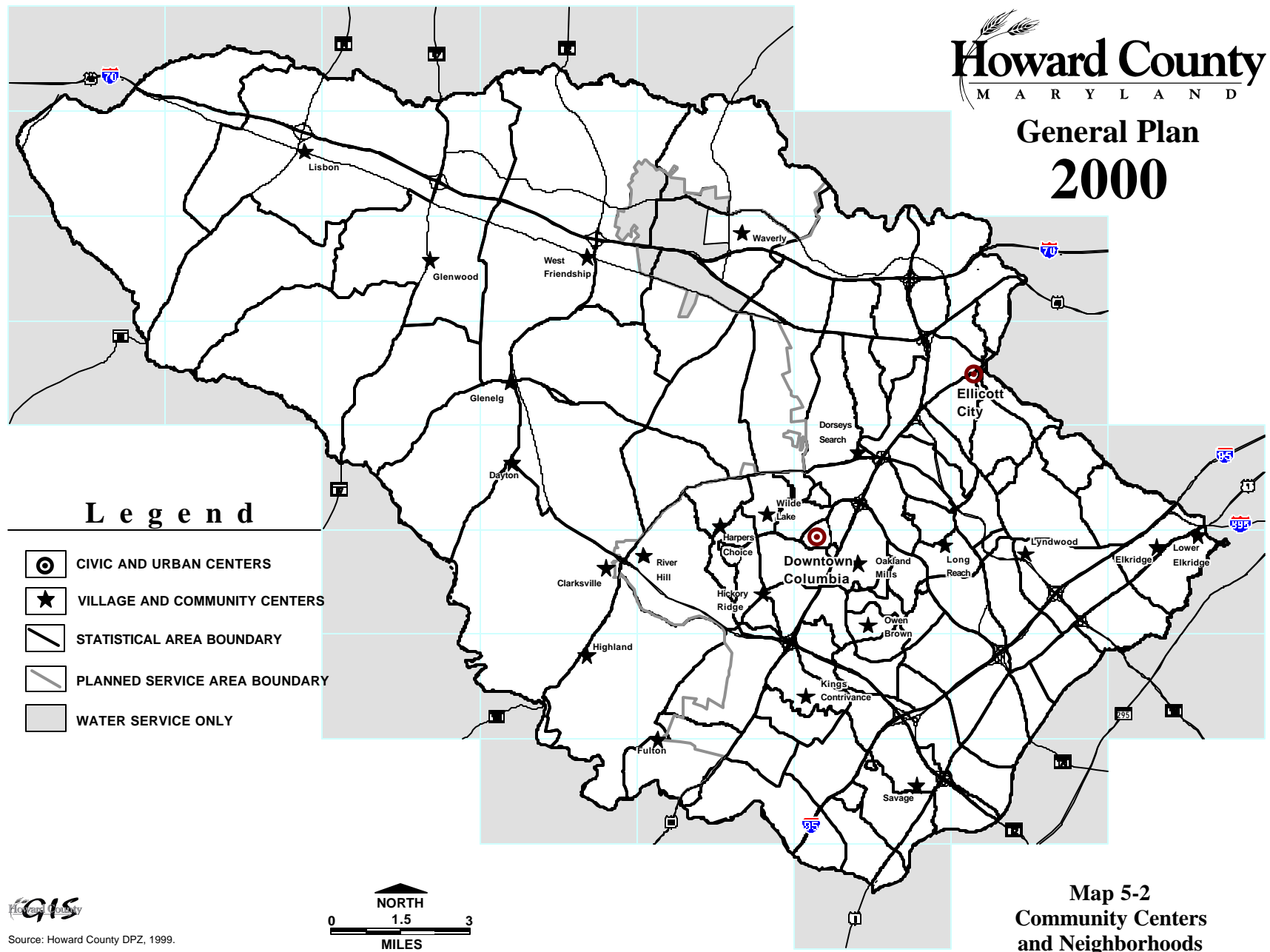
### Box 5-1

#### Key Concepts that Define Community Structure

Five planning and design concepts should guide community planning:

1. **Places.** The County should be seen or understood as a series of places that have a strong sense of identity, and shared interests and goals. These places occur at three different scales and are the “building blocks” that organize the landscape:
  - Neighborhoods or subdivisions (for example, Hammond Village, Dunloggin, Stevens Forest). Neighborhoods, although primarily residential, should ideally have a school, park, convenience shopping and a civic gathering area within walking distance. The goal for neighborhoods, over time, is to include more diverse uses so that daily needs are met closer to home.
  - Communities or villages (for example, Savage, Elkridge, Ellicott City, Owen Brown, Wilde Lake, Lisbon). Several neighborhoods should be linked to each other to form a community that shares everyday activities such as schools, parks and shopping areas.
  - Areas (Rural West, Columbia, Southeast, Greater Elkridge, Greater Ellicott City). This represents a division of the County into several generalized localities, composed of several communities.
2. **Nodes or focal points.** The County, and each of the Areas, Communities and Neighborhoods within it, should have recognizable gathering places or landmarks that reinforce identity and community pride. These sites can be civic buildings or commercial centers. Meaningful symbols can be natural or built.
3. **Edges.** Edges are generally strong or visible boundary lines such as major roads; others may be less distinct, softer edges such as stream valleys. Boundaries are important to defining places. The Planned Service Area will be a visually recognizable edge that defines the extent of urban development and the transition to the rural landscape. Within each level of places – neighborhoods, communities and areas - some edges will be permanent separators, while others may be more flexible and adjustable to respond to changing conditions.
4. **Travel corridors.** Major and minor travel corridors link destinations and activities and make it possible to move within and between places using various means of transportation (automobile, bus, rail, bicycle, foot).
5. **Green Corridors.** A comprehensive network of greenways linking natural areas, parks, recreation areas, wildlife corridors and community facilities should weave its way along major stream valley systems. Some of these corridors can be pedestrian or bicycle routes that link recreational places with employment and residential places.





vide a gathering place for a subdivision or neighborhood. For a larger community, a school, historic site or community park may provide a gathering place and source of community identity. Attractive public spaces, such as squares or central greens, in visible locations can provide spaces for informal gatherings or community events and can include amenities, such as tot lots and picnic areas. With development patterns substantially established, the number of new neighborhoods and commercial centers to be built in Howard County are quite limited. Nevertheless, opportunities will be available to strengthen or create focal points through a variety of means that may include renovation of commercial centers, redevelopment of older employment sites, restoration of neighborhood open space areas and reuse of historic buildings.

### **Mixed Use Development as a Community Focus**

The 1990 General Plan pointed out the value of mixed use development as a way of creating attractive, new communities with strong identities, as well as enhancing the County's suburban areas that lack a focus or sense of community. Howard County has several good examples of mixed use development. One is the very traditional Main Street environment of Ellicott City. Another is the contemporary Downtown of Columbia, which has a mix of shops, offices, cultural activities and housing. Although smaller and less diverse, Columbia's Village Centers and sections of other older communities, such as ElkrIDGE, Savage and Lisbon, are also examples of mixed use focal points.

The 1990 General Plan called for creating opportunities for other forms of mixed use, including major mixed use centers as large as several hundred acres, as well as smaller mixed use developments that could fit within and create a community focus for the County's existing neighborhoods.

Major mixed use developments were proposed as a means of ensuring efficient use of key remaining undeveloped tracts of land in the East (as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, *Balanced and Phased Growth*). The major centers can provide a variety of housing choices and the opportunity to live and work within the same area. The 1990 General Plan called for these major centers to provide adequate common public space and sites for civic facilities and social institutions, such as schools, churches and com-

munity centers.

Small mixed use developments were proposed to provide a stronger local identity and public environment for new or existing communities, and as a tool for revitalization of underused or obsolete sites along Route 1 and Route 40. These smaller mixed use centers would include such uses as stores, services, public and civic uses, recreation areas, green space and residences.

In response to the 1990 General Plan, the County's 1993 Comprehensive Zoning Plan created Mixed Use (MXD) Districts. Two variations, MXD-3 and MXD-6, offer different densities and standards for large (75 acres or more) and small (25 to 75 acres) MXD sites. Plans proposed for MXD development have been controversial, but Preliminary Development Plans for two MXD sites have been approved, with a third under review. These MXD developments should create a community focus for the surrounding neighborhoods.

This General Plan affirms the value of mixed use development, both for the large tracts of land in eastern Howard County designated as mixed use centers and for small sites, particularly along Route 1 and Route 40. Several zoning amendments increased the complexity of the requirements and review process for MXD Districts. In fact, this process has become onerous for small MXD-6 Districts. The approval process must be streamlined or an alternate zoning approach must be devised.

It may be helpful to further clarify how small mixed use developments should differ from the major MXD-3 properties. The small mixed use development sites would likely be identified through Corridor Revitalization Studies or Community Master Plans. On smaller sites, the mixed use development may take many forms and may not have all uses (retail, residential, employment) within a particular development. A mixed use development does not necessarily mean forcing employment and residential uses onto the same lot. One example of a small mixed use development could be an area with shops or offices and apartments above, as was typical in older, developed retail areas. Another example of smaller mixed use development sites could be a mix of uses, such as office, green space and residential, centered around a transit stop or on a cleared site elsewhere. A



third might be adding office or residential uses to replace part of an existing retail center.

### Ellicott City – The County Seat

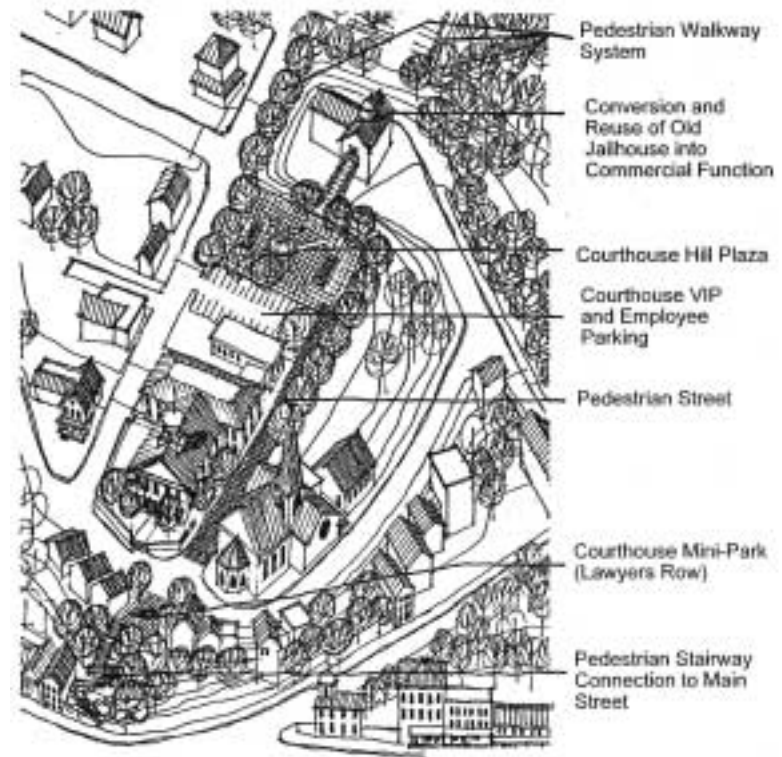
Ellicott City was founded in 1772 as the tiny trade center of “Ellicott’s Mills.” Ellicott City reflects the rich history of this region, from its founding as a mill center and its importance in the birth of the railroad in the 1830s, to its role as the commercial center for a prosperous farming and manufacturing area. By the 1860s, Ellicott City was named the Howard County seat and became the site of the County courthouse.

After two decades of decline following World War II and the rise of competing commercial areas, such as Route 40, revitalization efforts were inspired by Ellicott City’s Bicentennial celebration. To a large extent, revitalization has been guided by the 1976 Master Plan, *Ellicott City: New Life for an Old Town* (Figure 5-1). Since 1978, Ellicott City has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a designation that helps to preserve and encourage restoration of its old structures. The character of Ellicott City has continued to experience a gradual change in the 1990s. The City has become a thriving mix of shops, restaurants, government buildings, offices and apartments surrounded by attractive, historic, residential neighborhoods and the dramatic landscape of the Patapsco River valley. Using the Historic District Design Guidelines, the Historic District Commission plays a major role in protecting the heritage of the community. Active civic, historic and business organizations promote Ellicott City as a unique, attractive place to live, work and visit.

For many years there was little new construction within the Historic District. However, the diminishing supply of undeveloped land in the East led to concerns among residents about the intensity and types of residential development permitted under the current zoning. Residents also expressed concerns about the compatibility and sensitivity of development along the scenic roads that lead into and out of Ellicott City. These concerns about infill development, which are shared by residents in other neighborhoods, are discussed later in this chapter.

Ellicott City’s narrow, steep roadways are very constrained and have al-

**Figure 5-1**  
**Ellicott City: Commercial Center,**  
**Civic Hub and Historic District**



Source: Howard County DPZ, *Ellicott City: A New Life for an Old Town*, 1977.

ways posed congestion and parking problems. Pass-through commuter traffic further compounds peak hour congestion. Maintaining the pedestrian ambiance of the Historic District is a continuing concern.

### Downtown Columbia

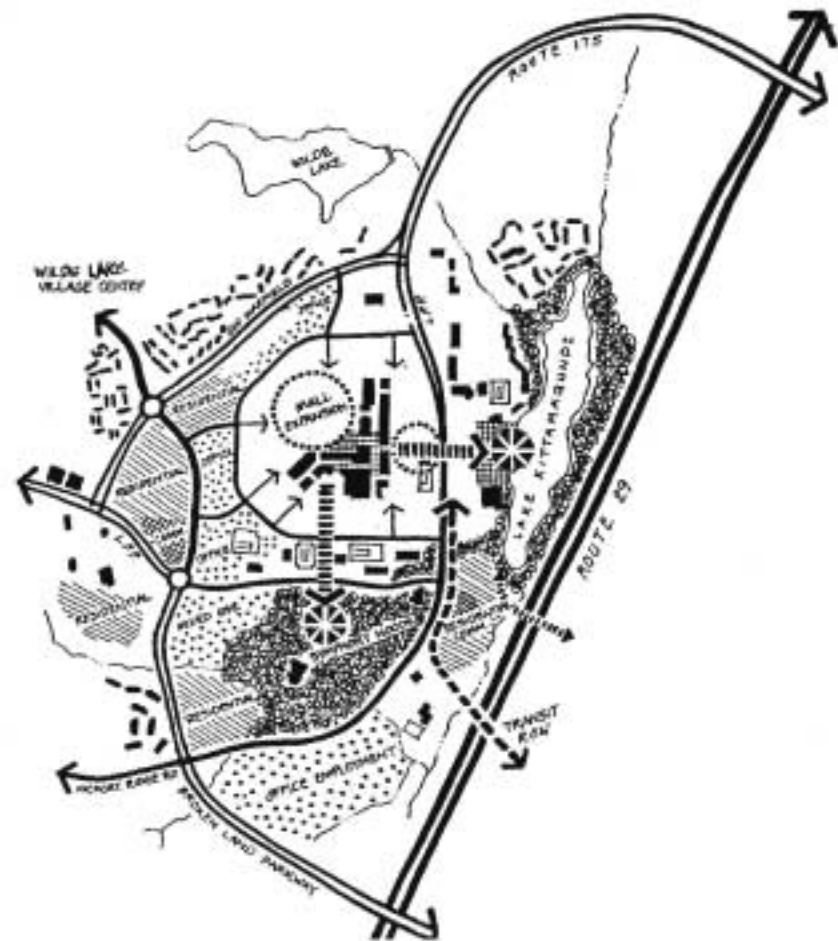
Downtown Columbia is evolving as the County’s largest and most urban mixed use center (Figures 5-2 and 5-3). Development since 1990 has rein-

forced this role. The addition of four new housing developments has resulted in a more balanced mix of residential and employment uses. The completed residential projects have added 100 townhouses, 216 condominium apartments and 210 rental apartments. An additional 550 apartment units have been approved for construction. Since 1990, three buildings with 390,000 square feet of office space have been constructed and a fourth is in the review process. The Mall has been expanded to add two more anchor department stores and smaller shops. Four restaurants and a multiplex theater have also been approved, bringing the retail expansion to 475,000 square feet and the total Mall to 1,264,000 square feet. Additionally, six parking decks have been built to serve the Mall and adjacent offices. These changes to the Mall, including the theaters and restaurants, make it more active as an evening and weekend entertainment center. In addition to its function as an employment and retail center, Downtown Columbia should also be encouraged to develop further as an artistic, cultural and civic center, with both indoor and outdoor facilities and activities.

Downtown Columbia includes not only the Lakefront and Mall areas, but also the adjacent Howard County General Hospital and Howard Community College. Additions to these two institutions since 1990 also reinforce Downtown Columbia's role as a medical services, educational and cultural center.

To accommodate Downtown growth, the planned road network has been completed, including a major entrance to Downtown via Broken Land Parkway and road extensions within the Mall area. The South Entrance Road, which connects US 29 and the Little Patuxent Parkway, is included in the capital budget as a joint County and State project to be rebuilt at a higher profile to reduce the likelihood of flooding. Although it is located in the floodplain and frequently floods, this point of access onto US 29 cannot be eliminated because it is needed to balance traffic loads and turning movements at intersections along the Little Patuxent Parkway and because its elimination would force the capacity of the ramp from southbound US 29 to Broken Land Parkway to be exceeded. The County will periodically review the use of the South Entrance Road to see whether it is contributing to the needed balance of traffic loads and turning movements.

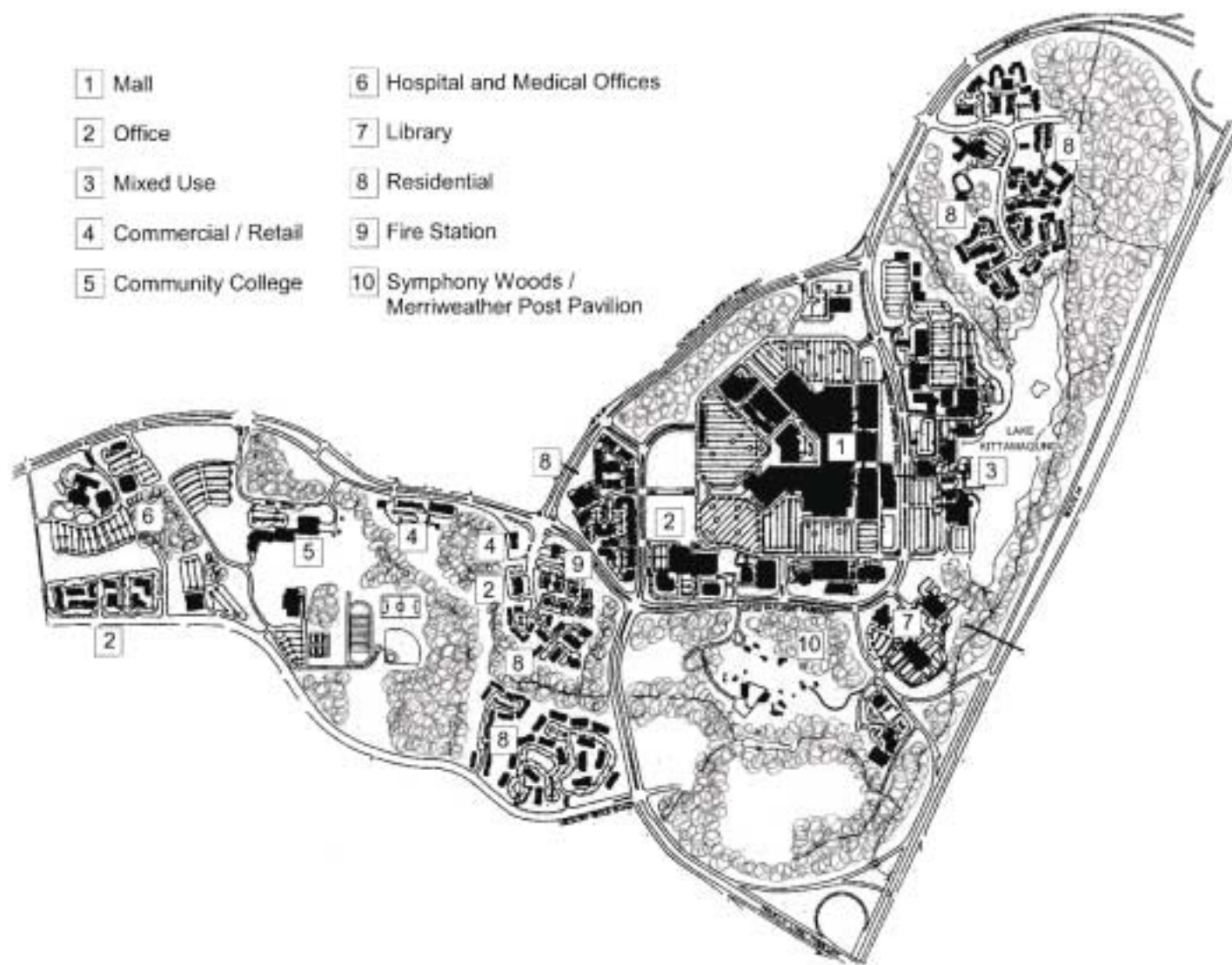
**Figure 5-2**  
**Downtown Columbia Planning Concept, 1990**



Source: LDR International, Inc.



**Figure 5-3**  
**Downtown Columbia, 2000**



Source: The Howard Research and Development Corporation and Howard County DPZ

Initial development of the 929-acre Downtown Columbia is almost complete. Excluding open space, only about 75 acres remain undeveloped. However, the potential for redevelopment of some parcels will continue to affect the mix of land uses in the future. A number of well-located buildings, with relatively low intensity uses, are almost 30 years old. If the current dynamic economy continues, it is likely that such buildings, alone or in combination, will be redeveloped for higher intensity uses. An example is the current plan to demolish the Rusty Scupper Restaurant and replace it with a new 74,000 square foot office building. Renovation and redevelopment will be important to maintaining Downtown's continuing vitality and growth. At the same time, when viewed as a maturing mixed use community, special attention needs to be paid to evolving infrastructure needs and to the continuation of high standards of maintenance in the Downtown area.

Both the remaining undeveloped sites and redevelopment opportunities should be used to reinforce the Downtown's evolving, urban mixed use character. The Town Center area of the New Town District has a wide range of permitted uses, as approved in the Final Development Plans for each Phase of the Town Center. In order to reinforce the urban character of Downtown Columbia, Howard Research and Development Corporation and other property owners should be encouraged to consider vertical mixed use structures for Lakefront redevelopment projects and for currently undeveloped infill sites. In particular, the incorporation of residential uses into mixed use structures should be explored. To the maximum extent possible, all development should include well-designed open space and pedestrian links to strengthen connections between Downtown buildings and uses.

A 1987 study of the Lakefront area recommended several projects to make the area a more active public space. Most of these projects have been completed. They include a pathway extension to the east side of the lake, improvements to the Lakefront public spaces on the west side of the lake, redefinition and reconstruction of the shoreline to make it more accessible, and improvements to the landscape design of the Little Patuxent Parkway. An important connection, the proposed path on the north side of the lake, has not been completed.

To make the Downtown more pedestrian-friendly, additional sidewalks were built in connection with recent development projects, but a more pedestrian-oriented street system is still needed. Improved pathway or sidewalk connections between the Lakefront and Mall and between the Library and adjacent housing are desirable. Also, the pedestrian crossings on Little Patuxent Parkway and the existing sidewalks on a portion of Broken Land Parkway should be extended to connect Downtown to the villages east of US 29. To improve the appearance of Downtown Columbia, the asphalt walk at the perimeter of the Mall should be replaced with concrete.

To help keep Downtown Columbia attractive, high standards of maintenance of the outdoor areas, including streets, pedestrian ways, landscaped areas and street furniture, need to be upheld by the Columbia Association, the Howard Research and Development Corporation and the County. A well-designed system of directional signs would aid wayfinding to various sites and facilities in Downtown Columbia.

Downtown public spaces can also be made more functional and active. Symphony Woods is an attractive open space resource that could be used more fully. Its natural beauty within an urban setting makes it an attractive resource that should be augmented for Columbia residents and for all those who come to Downtown Columbia to work, shop or spend leisure time.

## ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.1: Promote focal areas that will strengthen existing communities and provide attractive landmarks or gathering places.***

- ◆ ***Community Focal Points.*** Identify and enhance existing resources (commercial centers, open space, parks, historic sites and public buildings) that can provide community or neighborhood gathering places and sources of identity.
- ◆ ***Commercial Focal Points.*** Encourage neighborhood or community commercial centers to provide public spaces and more diverse uses, such as public and private community-oriented services like day care or human service providers.

***POLICY 5.2: Encourage the use of public space in commercial developments, public facilities and small mixed use developments.***

- ◆ ***Public Space to Define Centers.*** Promote the creation of parks, plazas or other green spaces as central focal points.
- ◆ ***Design Amenities.*** Establish design criteria for amenities to promote use of public space by including adequate shade, seating, a focal point, ease of pedestrian access and tempering of the impacts of parked and moving cars.
- ◆ ***Architecture as Public Edge.*** Establish design guidelines that encourage placing buildings closer to the front of properties so that they frame streets, public spaces and important views.

***POLICY 5.3: Promote new mixed use focal areas that are in scale and character with their context.***

- ◆ ***Small Mixed Use Developments.*** Consider revisions to the Mixed Use District (MXD) or the establishment of alternate new zoning provisions to encourage small, well-designed mixed use developments of housing, commercial and community facilities on Route 1 and Route 40, as well as in existing communities.
- ◆ ***Major Mixed Use Centers.*** Encourage the major mixed use sites designated on the General Plan Policies Map 2020 to be developed with a broad mix of housing choices and prices, public transit facilities, and sites for major civic facilities such as schools, day care, recreation or churches. Link these facilities with civic open space.
- ◆ ***Transit-Oriented Mixed Use Centers.*** Use the limited opportunities to create centers, with a mix of housing, jobs, stores and public space, around commuter rail stations.

***POLICY 5.4: Reinforce Ellicott City's role as the County's civic and historic mixed use center.***

- ◆ ***Civic and Government Complex.*** Concentrate County office and

support services within the County seat by creating a new government complex in Ellicott City.

- ◆ ***Preservation and Revitalization.*** Work with the Historic District Commission, civic, historic, business and community organizations, and the Howard County Tourism Council to ensure Ellicott City's continued vitality, while protecting the area's historic and natural resources.
- ◆ ***New Residential Development.*** Review zoning in the Historic District. Evaluate and, if appropriate, amend the residential provisions to ensure that new development will be compatible.
- ◆ ***Ellicott City Master Plan.*** Update the 1976 plan, Ellicott City: New Life for an Old Town, with particular attention to traffic, parking and pedestrian enhancements.

***POLICY 5.5: Encourage Downtown Columbia's continuing evolution and growth as the County's urban center.***

- ◆ ***More Downtown Residential Units.*** Increase the number of housing units and people living Downtown to maintain activity and support restaurants, shops and entertainment uses after normal office hours. Consider, in particular, the potential to address the growing market for active seniors.
- ◆ ***Redevelopment of Older Properties.*** Encourage the selective redevelopment of obsolete or underused properties for additional office, housing, retail, entertainment and cultural uses. Encourage property owners to seek vertical mixed uses, including residential, for Lakefront redevelopments as well as for currently undeveloped infill sites.
- ◆ ***Improve Pedestrian Connections.*** Design new development and redevelopment to strengthen the connections between the Lakefront, the Mall and Downtown housing. Relieve traffic congestion without degrading pedestrian use or further dividing the Downtown into isolated pockets. Replace the asphalt walkway around the outer perimeter of

the Mall, Little Patuxent Parkway and Governor Warfield Parkway with a concrete sidewalk to improve pedestrian convenience and safety and to enhance the urban Downtown “look.” Use a joint public-private effort to replace this walkway.

- ◆ **Transit Integration.** Improve the bus transfer point at the Mall to complement the Mall’s design and to better serve transit patrons.
- ◆ **Open Space.** Enhance Downtown open space, such as the edges of Lake Kittamaqundi and Symphony Woods, to promote enjoyment by the growing numbers of Downtown residents and visitors. Work with Howard Research and Development Corporation, Columbia Association and the Town Center Village Board to continue the lakeside path either as a full loop around the lake or through bridge connections at “Nomanisanisland.”
- ◆ **Cultural Center.** Encourage efforts to develop Downtown Columbia as an art, cultural and civic center (including indoor facilities and outdoor/open space activities) in addition to its function as an employment and retail focal point.
- ◆ **Infrastructure.** Foster high maintenance standards for streets, medians, pedestrian ways, landscaped areas and street furniture by the Columbia Association, Howard Research and Development Corporation, and other private property owners. Encourage them to develop a program of well-designed directional signage to aid orientation to Downtown sites, facilities, amenities and activities.
- ◆ **Symphony Woods.** Encourage measures that enhance Symphony Woods as an attractive, inviting open space resource for families and individuals to enjoy natural beauty within the urban setting.

## Residential Neighborhoods

### New Neighborhoods

Most new Howard County neighborhoods contain houses of high quality;

however, their settings have not always been complementary. To create better community settings, the design of neighborhoods must go beyond meeting market demand for certain types of housing and the minimum requirements of the Zoning and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations.

One way to improve neighborhood design is to preserve the original, often subtle, sense of place a development site may have that is attributable to the existing landscape and environmental resources. This concern will be described in some detail in Chapter 6, *Working With Nature*. Greater attention must also be paid to the quality of what is often called the built environment — the buildings, streets, parking areas and other elements of a development that together constitute an overall setting.

Once a neighborhood is fully developed, it is difficult to readjust the balance of various design decisions that give the local area its character. Therefore, the best opportunities to create well-designed, new neighborhoods will be within the larger remaining undeveloped areas, especially the mixed use sites. These areas are becoming scarce as the County approaches residential build-out.

Design of neighborhoods is usually based on a model or image that the developer, the designer or the zoning, subdivision and site development regulations seek to carry out. Two development patterns shape Howard County’s current communities and serve as alternative approaches for planning future communities:

1. **Traditional Neighborhood Design.** This pattern, established in the County’s traditional communities of Ellicott City, Elkridge, North Laurel, Savage, Lisbon and others during the County’s early history, is based on a compact network of connected streets with a mix of residential, commercial and civic uses ([Box 5-2](#) and [Figure 5-4](#)).
2. **Contemporary Cluster Development.** The County’s dominant pattern, however, is the contemporary cluster development. This pattern was the framework for laying out the residential areas in Columbia and has been adapted to most subdivisions during the last three decades of suburban development. A typical development has a

relatively small number of lots (commonly 20 to 100) of uniform size, with a circulation system of curving cul-de-sacs feeding into one or two collector roads. Open space is generally the only other land use within the development (Box 5-3 and Figure 5-5).

Both of these patterns of development have advantages and disadvantages. New development, particularly infill on vacant or underused parcels within established communities, should respect the surrounding patterns of use. However, in creating new communities and retrofitting older ones, rather than simply repeating old forms, developments should be made more pedestrian-friendly and more ecologically sensitive.

Much of the available residential land in eastern Howard County consists of relatively small infill sites surrounded by developed land. Development on infill parcels needs careful design because of its impact on the existing neighborhood. Often these infill sites were not developed earlier because of difficult conditions, such as environmental constraints or a location adjacent to a busy highway. Neighbors may object to development of these remaining woodland or green areas that they perceive as open space. In older neighborhoods (especially those developed prior to the establishment of zoning), current zoning and land development regulations often require patterns of development that differ from established patterns. How well these challenges are addressed over the next 20 years will be important to many existing neighborhoods.

Because proposed infill development may face opposition from the residents of the surrounding developments, it would be helpful for the developer of the infill site to discuss the proposed development with interested residents before seeking formal approval from the County. A pre-submission meeting with the community could ensure residents have correct information, identify concerns that can be addressed and, hopefully, allay fears of the development. The use of meeting facilitators or mediators may be worth considering for major developments that are controversial.

To promote sensitive development of infill sites, a balance of flexibility and added controls will be needed. Flexibility in some zoning requirements can help to lessen environmental disturbance and increase green space,

while additional requirements can address enhanced buffers or design features that will make an infill project an asset to the neighborhood. Flexibility does not imply any compromise of the environmental or community standards. Instead, it provides alternative ways to meet the regulations and to create a more appropriate design for a particular site.

According to the State publication, *Infill Development and Smart Neighborhoods*, infill development means “new development on vacant, bypassed, and underutilized lands within existing developed areas.” However, in order to deal effectively with infill sites, a more explicit definition will need to be established. The definition of infill, and the criteria upon which infill proposals will be evaluated, may vary depending on the intent of the regulations – if the purpose is to promote infill or to influence its design. Furthermore, the criteria for evaluating infill may vary depending on the type of land use proposed and the character of the surrounding land uses. A possible definition of residential infill sites could include those sites, located in the Planned Service Area, that are at least 60% surrounded by developed residential lots of one acre or smaller. Residential infill sites often have difficulty continuing the existing community development pattern, because of the site’s location, topography or configuration. Because infill sites have the potential to differ from existing residential development patterns, County regulations should be amended to require pre-submission community meetings for certain types of subdivision and site development projects, with requirements that may vary depending on the characteristics of infill sites. In these meetings, interested residents could receive information and comment on the compatibility of the proposed development.

More thoughtful use of open space needs to be encouraged in all new residential development, whether infill, larger subdivisions or residential areas of MXD Districts. Open space has generally not been used as a design element to create a strong public environment or community focus within residential developments. Open space is used primarily for environmental protection, stormwater management, as buffers between clusters or as extensions of private back yards. In townhouse and apartment developments, most open space is used to mitigate the impacts of parking lots and to meet required setbacks between buildings or as buffers along property edges.

## Box 5-2

### Traditional Neighborhood Design: Principles, Advantages and Disadvantages

#### Principles

- **Civic Buildings and Features.** Public spaces and buildings reinforce community identity and neighborhood pride. Schools, post offices, libraries, churches and plazas can all be focal points for gathering. Older structures (homes, accessory buildings, walls) and special natural features (specimen trees, farm ponds) serve as meaningful community symbols and a connection to the past history of a site.
- **Range of Uses.** A mix of uses (housing, office/employment, shops, public facilities, recreation) is established in a dense community. Different housing types and lot sizes are juxtaposed; small yards force people into public spaces; and buildings have shallow setbacks so they form edges for streets and squares.
- **Streets and Streetscape.** Streets serve pedestrians and automobiles equally, with a goal to reduce car use. Connected streets provide a comprehensive internal ordering pattern, often using a modified grid layout. Street systems may include a combination of streets and alleys (that serve garages), boulevards and one-way or single-loaded roads. Streets are narrow, lined with trees, have low design speed and sidewalks, and are punctuated by parks and public places. Streets are enhanced by plantings, lights, benches, fences and street furniture. Streets offer vistas so people can see their destination and can see open space, which reduces the appearance of density.
- **Parking.** Parallel on-street parking is provided. Off-street parking (including garages) is unobtrusive; parking lots are small. In dense town centers, structured parking may be needed to minimize walking distances between parking and businesses.
- **Open Space.** Squares and parks are visually prominent and clearly defined as community focal points. They tend to be formal, traditional, geometrical and tree-lined, and offer passive visual spaces for walking and sitting. Active recreation is concentrated in community-oriented gathering places (schools or recreation centers). Pedestrians use sidewalks in visible locations, rather than isolated or hidden pathways.
- **Architectural and Landscape Character.** Design character is based on regional styles and materials. New communities have strong design controls to ensure compatibility.

#### Advantages of Traditional Neighborhood Design

- Grid-like pattern creates a comprehensible internal structure. Circulation pattern is easier for traffic and pedestrians to understand, provides alternative routes and allows for greater choices in movement.
- Typically more compact and, therefore, more walkable.
- A more efficient way of distributing multiple uses and achieving higher density. Mixed uses on a grid look familiar to people. It's easy to expand a grid.
- Communities have strong design controls to ensure compatibility. It is easier to create "districts", which may create a better sense of community.
- There is a strong distinction between public and private space, with both lots and open spaces clearly defined and differentiated.
- Open spaces are more visible, therefore access may be easier. Formal design implies expectations for proscribed use or behavior.

#### Disadvantages of Traditional Neighborhood Design

- Grid-like system may not work with topography or natural features, can be monotonous and may limit the size or shape of lots.
- Connected streets and alleys may require more pavement. Straight roads may lend themselves to speeding. Emergency and service vehicles may have more difficulty maneuvering.
- More pavement may increase stormwater management concerns, with fewer options for natural drainage systems.
- A lack of connection to the natural landscape can occur, and open spaces can be constrained.
- Density is generally high with minimal private green space. Yards are small with a lack of privacy.
- Costs are generally higher due to increased infrastructure and amenities. Construction staging may be difficult.



**Figure 5-4**  
**Traditional Neighborhood Design Patterns**



Livable traditional communities have roads that are laid out using a modified grid pattern. Civic buildings are important focal points. Park land is nearby and in prominent locations. Different sized lots provide for a variety of housing types.



Traditional rural communities cluster housing tightly in a compact village arrangement of connected streets. The transition from small commercial and residential lots to large farms or estate lots is abrupt with a distinct difference between "town" and "country."



When grid street layouts are an extensive pattern of similarly sized lots they can become monotonous. Gathering places and open spaces are needed to provide focal points and links to the natural landscape.



New subdivisions that use the principles of neotraditional design have connected roads with some lots served by alleys. Open space includes small centrally-located formal parks or village greens and preserved natural areas.

Source: Howard County DPZ.

### Box 5-3

## Contemporary Cluster Development: Principles, Advantages and Disadvantages

### Principles

- **Land Use.** Land uses are separated. The major land use is typically single-family detached homes. Cluster, planned unit developments may feature a variety of single-family detached, attached and multifamily units. Lot sizes are smaller than in conventional development, and units are clustered in the areas most suited for development. Lot layouts respond to land features. Clustering helps achieve allowable density while saving natural features in open space areas.
- **Circulation and Streets.** Cul-de-sacs are used to provide privacy, reduce disturbance of natural features and reduce impervious paving. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic are separated, and a hike-bike system may supplement the street travel network.
- **Open Space.** Public or homeowners association open space weaves throughout the development. Pedestrian paths occur in the open space. Small, usable open space areas within semi-private clusters of residences provide safe play areas for children.

### Advantages of Contemporary Cluster Subdivisions

- At lower densities, curving streets give a balance of views of landscape and buildings. Views to natural open spaces help make the landscape look more appealing, with a more rural design. The intent is to be energy efficient, reducing paving and other infrastructure, thus reducing resource consumption.
- Building location can respond to landform and special features.
- Typically enclosed or inwardly focused for community feel, appears more private.
- Cul-de-sac says “private” to the outsider, but it is communal to the insider. Cul-de-sac protects homeowners from through traffic.
- Spine road typically provides easy access to cul-de-sacs.

- Open space layout is responsive to sensitive natural areas, protects the environment by leaving more of the earth undisturbed, keeps natural setting and provides animal habitat, wetlands and forests.
- Often features stormwater pond as amenity for entire community. Added natural areas provide space for infiltration of runoff (bioretention).

### Disadvantages of Contemporary Cluster Subdivisions

- Dead end roads (cul-de-sacs) mean limited choices of movement. Roads, especially cul-de-sac circles, become prominent.
- Lack of connected streets makes destination further away, greater tendency to use car.
- Access for public service vehicles can be difficult in cul-de-sacs.
- Curving streets are less attractive at higher densities, with reduced green space and awkward building relationships.
- Residential focus with uniform housing can become monotonous.
- Small lots mean less private yard space and lack of privacy because of views from open space into private yards and houses.
- Usually no prominent focal points or landmarks.
- Lacks organizational hierarchy; nature’s order or organic layouts are hard to understand.
- Fragmented open space or loss of optimal location for open space.
- Green space may be hidden or less accessible. Focus is on protected areas and passive recreation rather than usable, visible space for active uses and social gathering.
- Open space can be hard to patrol.

**Figure 5-5**  
**Contemporary Cluster Development Patterns**



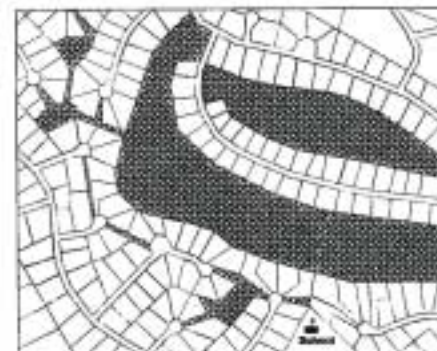
Homes on lots of varying sizes and shapes are concentrated along connected roads and short cul-de-sacs. Extensive open space provides green corridors for pedestrians and wildlife. Open space is visible from roads and gives a sense of identity to the community.



Networks of cul-de-sacs can make wayfinding confusing and difficult. Open space preserves natural features, defines edges of neighborhood and provides buffer to major road.



Some cul-de-sacs are overly long. Connecting some roads would make pedestrian travel distances between homes easier. Open space is limited to the edges of the community. A centrally located green space would provide visual relief and a place for gathering.



Long roads, uninterrupted by cross streets, may encourage speeding. Narrow fragmented slivers of open space do not connect and may serve merely as extensions of rear yards. Large open space areas are an amenity but have limited visibility.

Source: Howard County DPZ

Current regulations properly emphasize the environmental and recreational benefits of open space. As indicated previously in [Box 5-1](#), one key concept that should shape and link all County neighborhoods is a network of natural areas along major stream valley systems. Linking green space is a primary way to form this network. Natural areas within neighborhoods are highly valued by County residents.

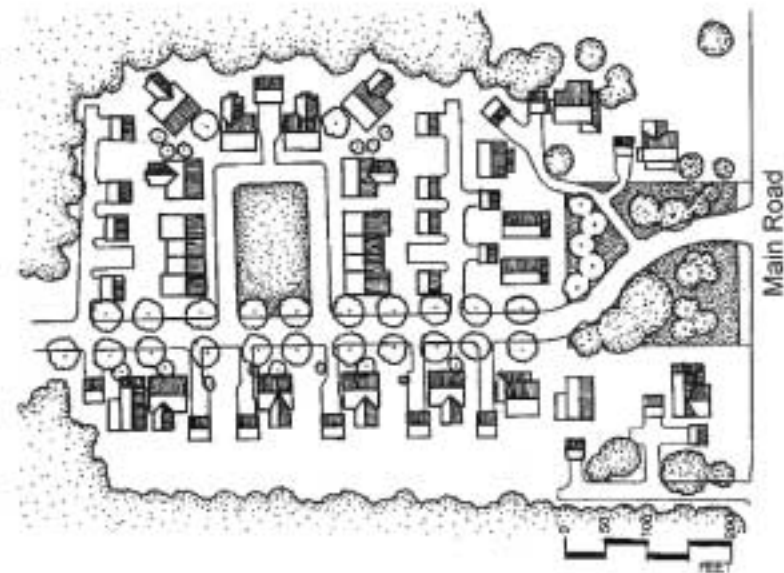
Green space networks should also include neighborhood recreation areas. An increase in the amount and type of required open space is needed (that is, land that is flat to gently sloping and dry), as the current recreational open space requirement in the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations is too low to generate enough usable area for active recreation. Areas for active recreation are needed within the neighborhoods, especially in developments with small lots and limited yard space.

In some cases, the minimum required open space is simply not sufficient. Especially on infill sites with environmentally sensitive features, it may not be possible to protect natural features, provide usable community open space and provide any required perimeter buffers along the boundary of existing neighborhoods with only the minimum required open space. This may become even more difficult with the State's impending new stormwater management requirements, as discussed in Chapter 6, *Working with Nature*, which will increase the area needed for stormwater management. In the zoning districts where these difficulties are most likely to be encountered, the Residential: Single (R-20 and R-12) and the Residential: Environmental Development (R-ED) Districts, increased open space requirements in combination with tighter clustering of lots may allow more attractive and environmentally sensitive design.

In addition to the required open space, thoughtful design can provide traditional open spaces, such as squares, crescents or central greens, that are the focus of the public environment along streets. Such open space is important for all housing types, but especially for townhouses and apartments. In higher density communities, homes on small lots can be placed close together so that they define the edges of a common open space; thus they enclose and frame these formal village greens ([Figure 5-6](#)).

In the design of new neighborhoods, the effects of noise pollution should

**Figure 5-6**  
**Public Space as Community Focus**



Green space along main road preserves existing trees and provides an attractive entrance feature. Small village green surrounded by homes offers a place for gathering and play.

Source: Arendt, R. Crossroad, Hamlet, Village, Town, 1999.

be reduced through better site design. The Design Manual requires a noise analysis if the proposed residences are located within a specified number of feet from a roadway or a rail line, or if the location is within an airport noise zone. The Design Manual also requires noise mitigation through the use of buffers, barriers or acoustical insulation, or through building orientation. Secondly, dense evergreen landscaping and berms should be used. To avoid the need for structural mitigation of noise, the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations should be amended to promote better site layout



and building orientation that would minimize the effects of noise pollution on the site.

## **Existing Neighborhoods**

As the County matures, sustaining and enhancing the quality of its existing neighborhoods will become increasingly important. With fewer new homes being built, housing needs will increasingly be provided by the existing housing stock. The County's fiscal health depends largely on revenue from property taxes and income taxes. Consequently, averting declines in the value and livability of older neighborhoods is a fiscal as well as a quality-of-life issue.

Several factors can potentially lead to decline in older neighborhoods. Market obsolescence is an important factor. Older communities compete for homebuyers with new subdivisions that have the latest features and housing styles. New subdivisions are likely to be close to newer schools, shopping centers and other amenities. Older housing requires repairs and perhaps significant renovation to maintain quality and property values.

Some of the neighborhoods built in the 1970s are especially difficult to renovate. Construction techniques and materials used in some areas of Columbia and other neighborhoods built in the 1970s have resulted in houses that require considerable maintenance and renovation. In these areas, repair and upkeep is expensive. Some of these homes are small by current standards and are on small lots, making additions very difficult.

Sometimes the age or income of neighborhood residents is an impediment to maintaining older homes. In some older Howard County neighborhoods, an increasing number of rental units is also a concern because the rented units are not maintained as well as the owner-occupied homes.

The perceptions of the quality of public facilities and services, especially schools, are critical to Howard County's older neighborhoods. As discussed later in this section, some County neighborhoods have become less desirable to families with children because the public schools are perceived to be of lesser quality than schools in newer neighborhoods. Perceptions of public safety can also strongly influence neighborhood stability.

The availability and condition of open space and community-owned facilities is another factor. Within many older communities, open space, recreation areas and pathways are limited or completely lacking. In newer subdivisions, open space and other community property is usually the responsibility of a homeowners association (HOA). As the subdivision ages, the HOA may not remain active or may have difficulty raising funds for substantial repairs (for example, resurfacing a parking lot). Delayed maintenance of open space and community facilities can lead to a general decline in the neighborhood's appearance.

When an area is perceived to be less desirable, it takes a concerted effort to reverse this image. If a neighborhood is allowed to lose its livability and vitality, people and businesses begin to move away, thus affecting community stability. It is important to address problems early before they become entrenched.

Examples can be found in other jurisdictions in the Baltimore-Washington area of older suburbs that decline as new developments are built. As the supply of residential land diminishes in Howard County, its neighborhoods will compete with new developments in neighboring counties, especially those with significant undeveloped land such as Carroll, Frederick and Anne Arundel Counties. However, decline of older neighborhoods is far from inevitable. Many neighborhoods benefit from characteristics of maturity, including mature trees and landscaping, solidly built housing and the stability and commitment of long-time residents.

Many strategies can be used to stabilize, improve and revitalize older neighborhoods. Community planning is needed to identify the revitalization tools and enhancements suitable for a particular neighborhood. For communities that clearly need conservation and reinvestment, a comprehensive planning effort leading to a Community Master Plan is recommended. Other communities may wish to address the need for specific improvements, such as infrastructure or property maintenance, improved landscaping or open space, new pathway connections, new recreation facilities or programs, restored historic resources or other specific projects. For these areas, more narrowly focused Community Conservation Committees will be appropriate. These types of planning efforts are de-

scribed in more detail in the last section of this chapter.

While it is not possible to list all the potential strategies for enhancing or revitalizing communities, many are mentioned in the *Policies and Actions* of this and other sections of this chapter. Improved public facilities and services and additional new amenities, such as open space, recreation areas, landscaping, paths, sidewalks, street trees, improved lighting, restored natural areas and other improvements, can enhance older neighborhoods.

It will also be important to have an array of tools available to address issues of property maintenance and use, a key issue for older areas. [Boxes 5-4 and 5-5](#) list tools that are commonly used to encourage or require property maintenance and improvement.

These tools are not limited to residential neighborhoods. Many apply also to commercial or industrial properties, as discussed in the next section. The Columbia Association and many homeowners associations are responsible for enforcing private covenants regarding property maintenance. The County needs to explore ways to work with the Columbia Association and other homeowners associations to improve enforcement of private covenants. If the County adopts maintenance codes for the exteriors of single-family residences, then public regulations may address many of the problems of covenants. Consideration should be given to a range of approaches to provide help. These approaches may include education, inspections, warnings, incentives, grant and loan programs, and other avenues.

The property maintenance code currently applies to rental residential properties. If the code is expanded to apply to other structures, additional staff for inspection and enforcement will be required as well as training for existing inspectors. An education program may be helpful to acquaint landlords and tenants with their responsibilities and to provide information on property maintenance.

As the County embarks on community planning, a comprehensive review

of the Zoning and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations will be needed to put in place some of the tools that will be needed for community enhancement. Provisions that ensure appropriate development of infill sites will be needed, as well as potential amendments to open space requirements, landscaping standards, perimeter setbacks and clustering provisions. The scale and intensity of uses allowed in residential areas by special exception will also need review.

In some cases, redevelopment will be a possible strategy. Redevelopment of sites with obsolete or dilapidated buildings can involve clearing and rebuilding or renovating existing buildings and infrastructure. It will most often be a strategy for commercial or industrial areas and, therefore, is discussed in more detail in the next section. Nevertheless, it also has potential for improving residential property and providing new infill housing in established residential neighborhoods. However, incentives may be needed to overcome some of the barriers to redevelopment. Redevelopment is usually more costly than building on raw land and often requires land assembly and demolition. Aging infrastructure, building codes that require renovated structures to be brought up to current standards, zoning and land development regulations that are incompatible with existing structures and difficulties in obtaining financing can hinder these proposals.

Depending on the barriers, incentives may be needed to make redevelopment feasible, such as expedited plan review, financing assistance, capital projects to upgrade infrastructure, design flexibility and density bonuses. Because of the commitment needed by the County to provide such incentives, any redevelopment projects to be undertaken will need to be identified by the County and the community as high priorities. There is also a State incentive program to support older neighborhoods, the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development program that approves “Designated Neighborhoods.” These are existing residential and/or commercial areas in need of revitalization. This program establishes eligibility to obtain State funds to implement community conservation strategies. A number of State agencies, such as the Maryland Department of Transportation, offer community enhancement grants to these “Designated Neighborhoods.”



## Box 5-4

## Incentives for Property Maintenance, Renovation and Redevelopment

Incentives to encourage owners to reinvest in older properties may be available from Federal, State or County governments. Grant funds from private foundations and community organizations are other potential sources. Revitalization often involves partnerships among a number of agencies and commitments from both the public sector and private property owners. Some of the most common incentives are:

- **Property Tax Incentives** - can encourage property owners to fix building or property maintenance code violations, or to make defined property improvements. Tax incentives could be available on a County-wide basis or in defined community revitalization areas. They can be income/age restricted or available to all property owners.
- **Revolving Loan Fund** - can provide low interest financing to encourage correction of code violations or other defined improvements by eligible property owners, or possibly by community organizations. The Columbia Association has a Revolving Loan Fund Program for correction of covenant violations for the exterior of the home. The State has loan programs, such as the MD Housing Rehabilitation Program, to correct code violations for owner-occupied single-family homes.
- **County Grant Program** - can provide matching grants to encourage community organizations to undertake community improvements that meet defined criteria. For example, Montgomery County has a Storefront Canopy and Signage Grant Program for designated revitalization areas.
- **County Capital Improvement Program** - should address public infrastructure and facility maintenance needs, as well as specific improvements identified through Community Master Plans. Examples might include improvements such as curbs and sidewalks, lighting and street trees.
- **County Operating Budget** - can address service needs identified in Community Master Plans (for example, schools, public safety, recreation, human services).
- **Revitalization Tax District** - can explore the possibility of instituting special assessment districts for revitalization efforts in specific areas. Typically, these types of districts are used to aid redevelopment of commercial or industrial areas.
- **Programs to Convert Homes from Rental to Ownership** - can help stabilize and improve an area. The County can use Housing and Community Development funding to buy, renovate and sell vacant or rental homes to income-eligible owners. The State's 404 Program provides low interest loans to encourage reinvestment in neighborhoods that are predominantly rental.
- **Assistance with Contracting for Common Repairs** - community groups, perhaps with County assistance, can facilitate contracting for common repairs (for example, roof, siding and driveway replacement, painting, addressing overgrown landscaping). Both older and busier working property owners may defer improvements because of the effort required to identify reputable contractors, solicit bids and review work contracts. By offering assistance with these tasks, community groups would encourage property owner improvements and could perhaps negotiate group discounts.
- **County-Community Cooperative Efforts and Assistance** - County agencies can offer assistance in obtaining low interest financing, serving as liaison to State and Federal grant sources, sponsoring a community clean-up day and other assistance.
- **Outreach and Education** - the County and community organizations can work to communicate the importance of property maintenance and reinvestment to sustaining older communities, property values and public safety. Information about requirements and incentives should be widely available.

**Box 5-5**

**Requirements for Property  
Maintenance and Renovation**

- **Property Rehabilitation Code** - can establish standards for renovation of older noncomplying buildings. For homeowners and small businesses, upgrading to full Building Code compliance can be very costly and a deterrent to desirable renovations. The County's current Code provides some flexibility, but perhaps not enough. The State approved Smart Codes legislation to create a model Rehabilitation Code that defines five categories of requirements from simple repair through change in occupancy. The State intends to offer incentives for jurisdictions to adopt the model Rehabilitation Code.
- **Property Maintenance Regulations** - can be established for single-family and/or commercial properties to address routine maintenance and appearance. Currently, the County has property maintenance standards only for rental property.
- **Code Enforcement** - is an important strategy to improve deteriorating areas and combat decline. Strengthening code enforcement may be as important as implementing new codes.
- **Covenant Enforcement** - Columbia and many residential developments have property maintenance covenants, as do many business parks. The County cannot enforce private covenants, but may be able to assist in other ways.

***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.6: Promote better design of new neighborhoods.***

- ◆ ***Open Space Requirements.*** Revise open space and lot size requirements in the Subdivision and Land Development and the Zoning Regulations to reduce the limits of disturbance, retain natural features and the site's essential character, provide more area for new storm-water management requirements and increase the usable area for

active recreation.

- ◆ ***Formal Public Space.*** Encourage part of the open space requirement for residential subdivisions to be used to create more formal public spaces, such as greens, squares, boulevard medians or landmark settings, to create community focal points and to meet traffic calming requirements.
- ◆ ***Connections Between Neighborhoods.*** Promote open space, road and pedestrian connections within and between individual neighborhoods, as well as links to shared community focal points or commercial centers. Use these connections to impart a sense of community organization and to improve views of natural features or public uses.
- ◆ ***Traditional Neighborhood Design.*** Encourage use of the existing zoning provisions that allow new development based on Traditional Neighborhood Design principles.
- ◆ ***Single-Family Detached Site Planning.*** Revise County development regulations to improve subdivision design, especially for small-lot, single-family detached housing, by using house types that fit existing topography, improving the orientation of adjacent houses and enhancing landscaping.
- ◆ ***Multifamily Site Planning.*** Establish design standards for apartments, condominiums and townhouses to set them within a local network of streets rather than oriented to parking lots. Discourage large, common parking lots in front of units along main streets; disperse parking to small lots at the side and rear of units.

***POLICY 5.7: Ensure infill development will be compatible with existing neighborhoods.***

- ◆ ***Pre-Submission Community Meeting.*** Require developers to hold a pre-submission community meeting for certain types of subdivision and site development projects proposed for infill sites.

- ◆ **Relationship to Adjacent Neighborhoods.** Amend the Zoning and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to ensure infill development is compatible with adjacent neighborhoods through such measures as landscaping, forest conservation buffers and pedestrian connections. Increase perimeter setbacks for infill subdivisions that differ from adjacent development in use or intensity.
- ◆ **Special Exceptions.** Review and amend, as needed, special exception regulations to ensure that the scale and intensity of the permitted special exception uses are appropriate in residential districts.
- ◆ **Design Flexibility.** Consider zoning provisions that promote compatible infill development by providing increased design flexibility in exchange for additional open space or amenities.

**POLICY 5.8:** *Establish the tools needed to implement community conservation and revitalization programs.*

- ◆ **Incentives for Reinvestment.** Adopt an appropriate property reinvestment incentive program (tax incentives, loans and/or grants). Inform homeowners about Federal, State and County programs that provide assistance for revitalizing individual properties.
- ◆ **Model Rehabilitation Code.** Adopt the Maryland Smart Codes Model Rehabilitation Code to encourage the stabilization, repair and revitalization of deteriorating structures.
- ◆ **Code Enforcement.** Increase the effectiveness of County Code enforcement, especially in areas where community conservation is an issue. Encourage homeowners and business associations to enforce existing covenants.

## Commercial and Industrial Areas

### Commercial Centers

Part of maintaining a high quality of life is providing residents and workers easy access to the goods and services they need as part of their normal activities. The location of larger commercial centers and the types of stores and services offered should be appropriate to definable markets (Box 5-6). The inventory of commercial property must be reasonably in balance with the need for commercial services. An overabundance of commercial space within a community can lead to deterioration of some commercial properties, which can contribute to the deterioration of surrounding areas.

As residential growth in the County slows, fewer new commercial projects will be built. The County will increasingly need to rely on existing commercial sites to provide its retail and service needs. Fifteen years ago, the primary retail centers in the County were the Columbia Mall and strip commercial shopping areas along Route 40. Today, a new generation of shopping centers featuring “big box” stores has been constructed in such locations as Snowden River Parkway and Long Gate on MD 103. In addition, new enclaves of stores, services and entertainment (including movies and restaurants) have been built in some office parks. These pose serious competition to the older commercial centers.

Older, community-oriented commercial centers, usually anchored by a supermarket, also face an uncertain future as supermarket chains adopt larger store plans that do not fit into these centers. The small businesses that share these centers depend heavily on the traffic generated by the anchors. These community commercial centers often provide a focus for the surrounding neighborhood. If the commercial center declines, surrounding residential areas may suffer erosion of their livability and, perhaps, their property values. The major reconstructions recently completed at three Columbia Village Centers to expand the grocery stores are examples of the reinvestment sometimes necessary for older commercial sites to remain competitive.

**Box 5-6**

**Types of Commercial Centers**

**Local Convenience Centers.** These convenience centers serve nearby residential areas and give many residents pedestrian access to essential retail stores. Pedestrian access can help keep trips for very basic needs off the main road network. A floating zone category in which locational and design issues are addressed as part of the approval is the best means to find sites for these centers.

**Community Level Centers.** These centers serve areas beyond a single neighborhood and thus can include supermarkets and numerous non-retail services such as branch banks and medical offices. These centers must be located on roads that give them easy access from areas other than their immediate neighborhood.

**Regional and Subregional Centers.** These centers contain a greater variety and number of stores and services, including highly specialized ones. These centers must have direct access to arterial roads to be successful, since most of their market is not from surrounding neighborhoods and may even attract out-of-County residents.

**Retail and Services in Employment Areas.** Commercial uses in employment areas serve the concentration of businesses in significant employment developments where there is a distinct market for certain retail stores and services (for example, meals, copy services, office supplies, express shipping services). The commercial needs of these employment centers and a growing work force must be met in ways that do not compromise the functions of other retail and service centers, or increase mid-day or post-working day traffic on the road network.

**Specialized Centers.** These centers are based on the clustering of highly specialized and compatible retail or services into well-managed and well-designed commercial developments. The auto repair center on Dobbin Road near Columbia is an example of this type of center. Such centers can decrease the tendency to locate such stores and services randomly along main roads. Such centers could also make it easier to regulate nuisances specific to such uses (for example, solid waste). Re-development of existing strip commercial corridors to accommodate such centers may be appropriate.

Another threat to existing commercial centers is the continued illegal establishment of retail stores within employment zoning districts, specifically the Manufacturing: Light (M-1), Manufacturing: Heavy (M-2) and Planned Employment Center (PEC) Districts. In addition to displacing potential industrial or employment uses, these stores also lead to greater vacancy rates in older commercial centers. This, in turn, affects the vitality and reinvestment potential of areas designated for retail activity. Revisions to restrict retail uses in the M-1, M-2 and PEC zoning regulations are needed, along with an effective enforcement program.

As the County matures, today's new commercial centers will also age and may eventually be perceived as outdated and less desirable. New trends, such as the growth of Internet-based retailing, will affect consumer shopping habits. To remain competitive, existing centers will need to respond to changing consumer demands. Promoting the redevelopment and renovation of existing commercial centers will need to be an ongoing priority for the County.

Various tools to guide and expedite the renovation or redevelopment of older centers are needed to minimize periods of decline. Instituting a commercial property maintenance code and enforcing it is a means of ensuring areas don't decline. Incentives (tax credits, low interest loans or grants) might be offered to encourage renovation or redevelopment in some instances. The formation of local merchants associations may help foster pride and cooperation in improving commercial properties in some areas. Based on research and input received during the Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study, decisions about which tools to use will be made.

The Community Master Plans will include commercial centers within the communities being studied. These plans can examine ways that improvement, renovation or revitalization of centers can be encouraged or assisted by the County and the community. Many of the incentives and requirements listed previously in [Boxes 5-4 and 5-5](#) can also apply to neighborhood and community commercial areas.

The appearance of commercial centers and their impact on adjacent communities are important community enhancement issues. Local and community commercial centers are often sited within or adjacent to resi-

dential areas and need to blend in as much as possible. Redevelopment or renovation of aging commercial centers can lead to significant improvements in design and appearance. Commercial centers can be animated, active community amenities and can provide a community focus if more attention is given to building and landscaping design, to green areas or plazas that offer seating and other amenities, and to pedestrian connections to neighborhoods. The community focus is strengthened by providing connections to parkland or civic uses.

The 1990 General Plan addressed many issues of commercial design. Those that are still relevant or were only partially implemented are retained in this Plan. Although landscaping standards were enacted in response to the 1990 General Plan, a recent survey demonstrated that these standards are inadequate. They require considerably less than the standards in Columbia and in some surrounding counties. In addition, enforcement is a problem, as dead landscape material is often not replaced. The *Policies and Actions* of this section also identify additional tools and regulations needed to address issues of scale, parking, relationship to nearby residences and pedestrian circulation.

## Commercial and Industrial Corridors

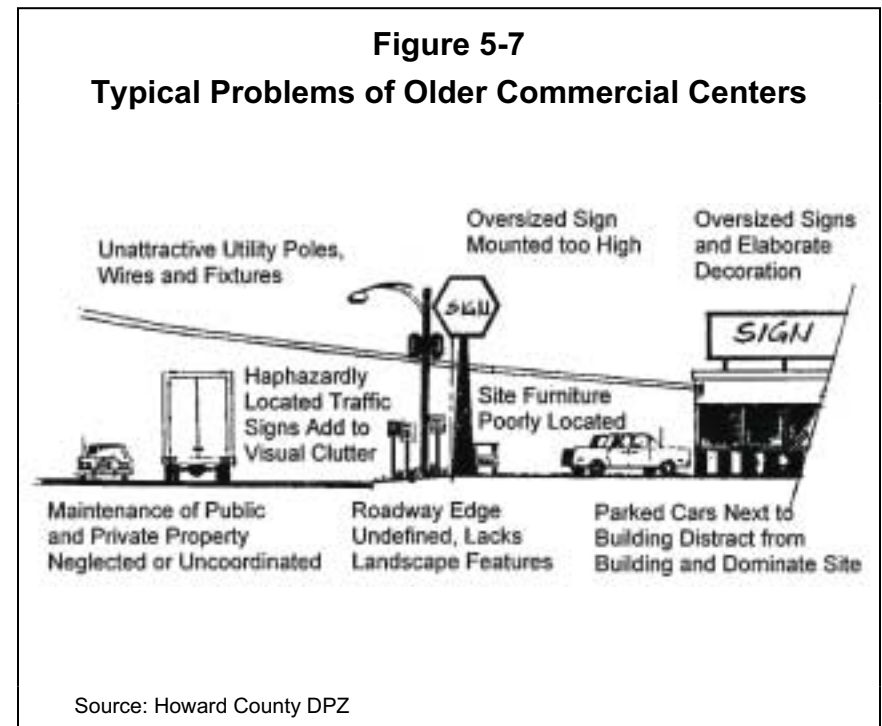
Route 40 and Route 1 are Howard County's primary commercial and industrial corridors. Residential neighborhoods abut the narrow strip of commercial zoning along the highways. In a few locations, office/retail parks extend further back from Route 40. Route 1 is more varied, with a mix of commercial and industrial uses. The commercial strip sections of the Route 1 corridor are most concentrated near the communities of Elkridge, North Laurel and Savage. Other parts of the Route 1 corridor are primarily industrial. Route 1 serves as the access road to the County's large industrial areas east and west of the highway.

Commercial strips are perhaps the most well-known, negative image associated with the growth of bedroom communities after World War II. The stores and services were spread along the arterial roads that led to metropolitan employment areas. These strips were designed to be accessible only by automobile.

Commercial strips often replaced the commercial main streets or downtowns of traditional small towns, such as Elkridge, Savage and Ellicott City. Commercial strips were seldom planned to accommodate any civic presence, social institutions, open space or public spaces. They became extremely hostile environments for pedestrians and allowed no direct access to adjacent residential communities (Figure 5-7).

Since 1971, the County's General Plans have emphasized the need for conveniently located commercial areas without further expansion of strip commercial development along main roads. Commercial strips will not be expanded, but they will remain an important part of the County's commercial land uses. They offer many opportunities for businesses with large markets and the need for direct access to arterial highways.

Both the Route 1 and Route 40 corridors, as well as the industrial areas along Route 1, need revitalization/redevelopment planning to sustain con-



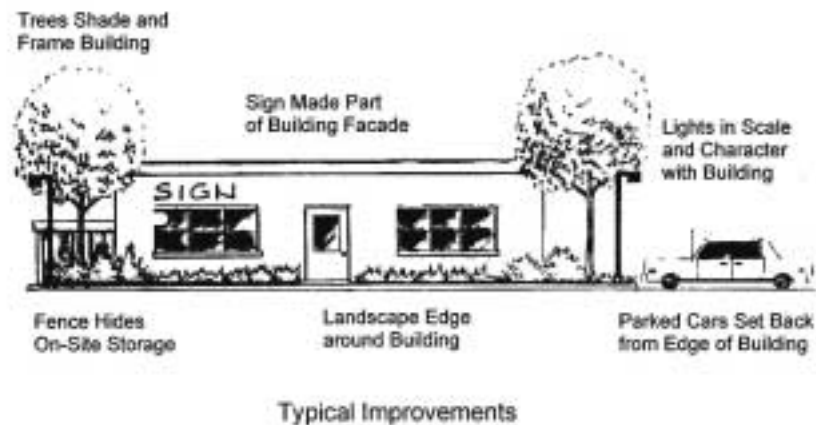
tinuing, long-term economic development. The County's ability to accommodate new businesses and industries will depend upon renovation of older buildings and redevelopment of properties that are underused or obsolete.

The focus on the Route 1 and Route 40 corridors is important not only for their long-term economic development potential but also to improve the appearance and function of these corridors. Redevelopment of these areas on a significant scale could create stronger community centers, a better mix of stores and services to serve nearby communities, some opportunities for small-scale mixed use developments, improved traffic circulation patterns and a vast improvement in the image and quality of the public environment along these highways. The appearance of older strip commercial centers can be enhanced to make them more attractive, and redevelopment can convert the single-use strip centers into mixed use centers (Figures 5-8 and 5-9).

Many aging areas along Route 40 and Route 1 are dominated by uses that may not survive the life of this General Plan. Some sites are too small for the intensity of the uses on them. Others may be underdeveloped – a small building and parking lot on a relatively large lot. Also, the *ad hoc* pattern of development on a site-by-site basis has created numerous redundancies. Each business has its own access to the main arterial, its own parking lot (often half empty) and its own building. The only green space on such sites is created by required landscaped areas and setbacks. The normal attrition rate of businesses guarantees that, throughout the next 20 years, obsolete or uncompetitive businesses will close, creating numerous opportunities for reuse of sites along Route 40 and Route 1.

Along the industrial portion of the Route 1 corridor, warehouse-distribution centers have become a dominant land use. Some older warehouse-distribution sites are outmoded due to their physical design, including such features as low ceiling heights and smaller truck bays, that make it difficult to convert these structures to other uses. Property suitable for new, large warehouse facilities is limited and is becoming relatively expensive in comparison to values found in other jurisdictions. The declining availability of sites and a continued increase in land values could provide

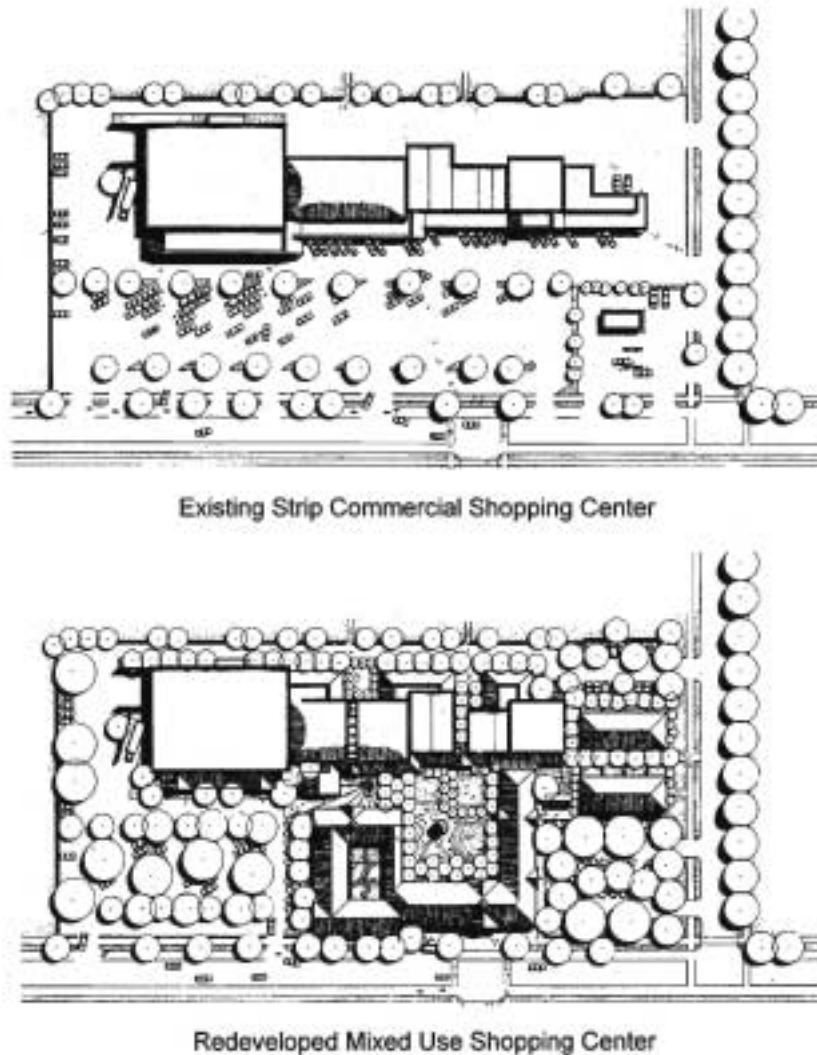
**Figure 5-8**  
**Potential Improvements to Strip Commercial Image**



Source: Howard County DPZ



**Figure 5-9**  
**Redevelopment of Strip Commercial Site**  
**into Mixed Use Center**



Source: Corbett, M.N. A Better Place to Live, 1981.

an impetus for redevelopment of obsolete warehouse and manufacturing properties. When such sites are large or numerous, they offer the opportunity for redevelopment to be well-planned and attractive.

To address the economic development and community enhancement potential of Route 1 and Route 40, Corridor Revitalization Studies must be developed. Additional revitalization or redevelopment plans could be developed for older business parks in other parts of the County, if needed. Planning for the Route 1 and Route 40 corridors will be closely related to the Community Master Plan process, because major communities, such as Elkridge, Savage, North Laurel and Ellicott City, include portions of the Route 1 and Route 40 corridors. The planning process is described in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Factors that make development difficult within sections of the Route 1 and Route 40 corridors, as discussed in Chapter 4, *Balanced and Phased Growth*, are the limited availability of large parcels, the need for land consolidation, problematic highway access, zoning or building code provisions, obsolete older buildings, environmental concerns, aging infrastructure and utilities, and lack of stormwater management.

Incentives for revitalization/redevelopment may include additional permitted uses, increased flexibility in bulk regulations, expedited processing, lower development review fees, and tax or development financing incentives. Local business improvement associations could help to implement and manage coordinated improvements in landscaping, access, signs and facades. County or State capital projects to improve infrastructure can encourage and support private investment.

### ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.9: Allow for the appropriate size, location and purpose of commercial centers.***

- ◆ ***Definition of Centers.*** Use the categories of commercial centers defined in Box 5-6 to guide land use decisions affecting existing and future commercial needs. Ensure that the size and location of new, ex-

panded or redeveloped commercial centers will be in keeping with the road capacities and their surroundings.

- ◆ **No Extension of Commercial Strips.** Reaffirm the policy of past General Plans to not extend strip commercial development areas on major roads beyond their present limits.

**POLICY 5.10: Improve the design of commercial areas.**

- ◆ **Scale of Buildings.** Adopt standards that require commercial structures to be in scale with adjacent residences. Reduce the scale and uniform appearance of commercial buildings, by using techniques such as articulating facades and roof lines, having multiple entrances and locating smaller retail stores in larger centers for variety.
- ◆ **Multiple Facades.** Require that all facades of a commercial building that are visible from surrounding roads, residential or public properties be similar in design to the front facade. Prohibit the use of blank rear or side walls in locations visible from roads.
- ◆ **Parking Locations.** Encourage the dispersal of parking into small, heavily landscaped lots and discourage large parking lots in locations that dominate the public image of the site along the main roads leading to the site. Increase the requirements for internal parking lot landscaping to visually break up large parking lots, provide more shade and improve the pedestrian environment.
- ◆ **Landscaping.** Improve landscape design standards and strengthen enforcement to better mitigate the visual impacts of commercial properties. Require heavily landscaped buffers along the sides and backs of commercial structures and along the perimeters of commercial centers to screen large parking lots, provide shade along sidewalks and offer an attractive streetscape. Apply, where feasible, new landscape design standards to commercial properties that are undergoing renovation.
- ◆ **Pedestrian Improvements.** Install sidewalks along roads that provide access to commercial centers and connect store entrances to street

crossings, transit stops and focal points for increased safety and convenience for pedestrians. Adopt standards that encourage provision of pedestrian-scale features and spaces, such as landscaped plazas and sitting areas.

- ◆ **Sign Code.** Review the County Sign Code for possible revisions to commercial signs.

**POLICY 5.11: Make existing commercial centers and strip commercial-industrial corridors more efficient and attractive, and give them a more positive role in communities.**

- ◆ **Older Commercial Properties.** Develop strategies to encourage renovation or redevelopment of older commercial centers, particularly those showing indications of decline. Make local commercial centers more positive community focal points through design improvements and renovation.
- ◆ **Corridor Revitalization Studies.** Develop Corridor Revitalization Studies for Route 1 and Route 40 in partnership with representatives of affected businesses, industries and communities.
- ◆ **Redevelopment Strategies.** Define potential redevelopment sites through the corridor planning process. Identify planning goals, potential barriers and strategies to promote redevelopment for these sites. Establish appropriate, cost effective incentive mechanisms, including incentives to encourage consolidation of small properties for more effective redevelopment.
- ◆ **Redevelopment Standards.** Assess current zoning and land development standards as they apply to strip commercial and industrial areas. Provide revised or alternative standards to encourage redevelopment with improved building, site and landscape design.
- ◆ **Public Environment.** Improve the public environment along the right-of-way through consolidation of access driveways, screening of exposed storage, unified designs of signs and landscaping, and other means. Promote joint improvements (for example, shared entrance

and parking) where small, separate businesses predominate.

- ◆ **Mixed Use Opportunities.** Evaluate the potential of using the Mixed Use (MXD) District or other mixed use planning approaches for appropriate sites along Route 40 or Route 1, where the desirability and viability of these sites continuing as strictly commercial or industrial properties is questionable.
- ◆ **Public Facilities.** Seek appropriate locations for public facilities and services, and use these to anchor redevelopment or enhance the overall image of adjacent areas.

## Public Facilities, Infrastructure and Services

### County Buildings

Howard County's public buildings, such as schools, recreation centers, senior centers and libraries, play an important role in community enhancement. Well-maintained public buildings enhance and sustain the community's quality of life and encourage a high level of private investment by property owners. Conversely, facilities that are neglected, obsolete or in need of repair will make a community less attractive and discourage private investment.

The County's public buildings will age along with the neighborhoods they were built to serve. While the last decade was marked by much new school construction, 43 of the County's 66 school buildings were built before 1980. By 2020, these buildings will be more than 40 years old, with 18 buildings being more than 50 years old. Schools, libraries and recreation facilities are all heavily-used facilities that need constant maintenance, functional upgrades and eventual replacement, leading to substantial outlays of public money. Technological changes also require costly upgrades of equipment and infrastructure, especially for schools and libraries.

Capital costs for maintenance, renovation and replacement of facilities and

infrastructure will be an increasing focus of the County's operating and capital budgets, as discussed in Chapter 4, *Balanced and Phased Growth*. Although expensive, these projects are important to sustain the quality of life and desirability of older neighborhoods.

Schools hold a place of particular importance among the public services and facilities that sustain and strengthen communities. Many families have chosen to live in Howard County because of its excellent school system. However, some older neighborhoods are at a competitive disadvantage for new with school age children because of public perceptions of the schools. Compared to newer communities in the County, these neighborhoods, primarily in Columbia and the Southeast, generally have older schools, a mixture of housing types and values, and a higher proportion of low- to moderate-income families. The urgent need during the 1990s to build new schools to keep pace with population growth limited the school system's ability to keep up with needed renovations. The Howard County Public School System has a systematic renovation plan, however, renovations and improvements are contingent upon funding availability. These schools are often perceived as less desirable because of their older facilities, lower results on measures of student performance, such as standardized test scores and attendance rates, more diverse student population and higher proportion of low-income and transient students.

Although school quality is not always considered a land use issue, it becomes an important one if families avoid or move from certain neighborhoods because of the reputation of neighborhood schools. Realtors report that this is occurring in some County neighborhoods. Over time, this will undermine the levels of investment and property values in these neighborhoods. If a negative perception of schools is combined with other problems, such as higher crime rates or deferred property maintenance, a neighborhood can rapidly lose its value and livability. The County, the Howard County Public School System and communities need to work together to address the interrelated problems of negative perceptions of schools and other early indicators of neighborhood decline.

As County communities age in the coming years, school quality may become a greater concern in older neighborhoods. County communities will

compete for homebuyers with newer developments in neighboring counties. With few new schools being built in Howard County, keeping the existing schools in excellent condition and updating school programs and facilities, as needed, will be increasingly important. To address this important issue, the County Executive and the Howard County Public School System formed the Leadership Committee on School Equity. [Box 5-7](#) summarizes the Committee's findings and recommendations.

While the need for new public buildings will lessen as growth slows, the County will need some new public facilities to serve new development and/or to address deficits in services. With careful attention to location and design, recreation centers, senior centers and other public buildings can bring a sense of public purpose to what might otherwise be a strictly commercial or strictly residential context. Their civic significance can be greatly increased by location within or near public spaces that both enhance the setting for such facilities and are amenities in their own right. The ability of new or replacement public facilities to play a role in community enhancement depends on whether decentralized services are appropriate in a specific community. Often, services such as senior centers, athletic fields, tot lots, parks, other recreation facilities and libraries should be decentralized.

As the County approaches build-out, it is critical to ensure that necessary public facilities and services can be provided within communities with little undeveloped land. It will become more difficult to site new facilities, especially those that should be located where transit service can be provided. Redevelopment of commercial or industrial sites may provide opportunities to locate public services in a mixed use setting.

## **Infrastructure**

Much of the County's public infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, stormwater management and water and sewer, was built over the past 30 years during the County's period of rapid growth. Extensive repair and replacement of much of this aging infrastructure will be needed over the next 20 years. Capital projects to repair and replace infrastructure may be temporarily disruptive, but are important to sustaining the value and attractiveness of a neighborhood. These projects can also provide opportu-

nities for other improvements, such as new sidewalks, landscaping or restoration of natural areas.

Coordinated planning for repair and replacement of infrastructure will be essential to avoid repetitive disruptions and unnecessary costs. For example, sidewalks and roads should not be repaired just before a project to replace water or sewer lines is undertaken. The County currently lacks an adequate method of coordinating these projects.

Older areas are sometimes missing infrastructure and amenities common to newer subdivisions, such as sidewalks, curbs and gutters, street trees, street lights and open space. Certain types of infrastructure may benefit some neighborhoods, but may be out of character or not desired by the community in other areas. Development of Community Master Plans or establishment of Community Conservation Committees will allow infrastructure needs to be identified and prioritized.

Stormwater management is another component of public infrastructure. Many older communities were developed prior to the adoption of stormwater management regulations and now have problems with drainage, and stream bank erosion and water quality. Other communities are experiencing similar problems due to the age and lack of maintenance of their stormwater management facilities. Building new facilities and retrofitting existing facilities in these areas will be difficult if there is little or no available public land. New stormwater management regulations and the need for a comprehensive stormwater management program with ongoing maintenance are discussed in Chapter 6, *Working with Nature*.

Providing new infrastructure is costly, but grant programs are available to assist with some of these projects. For example, the Federal government provides grants through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) to fund development of key pedestrian linkages. Also, limited grant funds are available from the Maryland Department of the Environment for stream restoration projects.

## **Public Services**

Public services, including schools, police, fire and rescue services, health

### **Box 5-7**

#### **School Equity**

High quality education is the primary reason families choose Howard County as a place to live. The continued success of the County's public school system is also a key to continued economic growth.

Despite the overall excellence of education in Howard County, significant inequities exist. Schools with disproportionate numbers of children with multiple needs have lower performance scores, higher rates of staff turnover, higher percentages of teachers that are new and non-tenured, and higher rates of student mobility than other schools.

The Leadership Committee on School Equity defines "equity" as fairness to all children. Equity requires that each student be provided with the resources, support and instruction necessary to achieve academic success. Schools with disproportionate numbers of children with multiple needs require more support than schools with fewer such children.

The Committee made 70 specific recommendations. Some of the most significant are:

#### **Factors Affecting Equity**

- The school system should replace the annual, ad hoc and contentious exercise of redistricting with a comprehensive districting plan that creates a stable path for children from kindergarten through high school.
- In conjunction with the County-wide districting plan, all schools should be protected from open enrollment for three years to allow new school communities the opportunity to unite and function cohesively.
- The \$2.1 million in equity funding proposed in the Superintendent's Proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2001 should be more clearly linked to plausible, demonstrable improvements in equity.
- The school system budget for Fiscal Year 2002 should include

information on how overall funding will be allocated to each school in the County and provide a credible rationale for that allocation methodology.

#### **Resources and Programs**

- The school system's Fiscal Year 2002 Capital Budget should reflect systematic planning for capital improvements, showing when renovation is scheduled for each school in the County.
- Each school that consistently underperforms should be required to prepare, with assistance from the school system, an improvement plan.
- The term "focus school" should be eliminated and replaced by a formula for allocating resources to schools based upon a continuum of needs.
- The school system and Howard Community College should jointly develop a new model for assuring that children, who do not go on to college, graduate from high school with skills that are marketable and needed by the County's business community.

#### **Staffing**

- The school system should develop improved procedures for evaluating the performance of school administrators.
- The school system should develop strategies to reduce teacher and staff turnover at high-need schools.

#### **Accountability**

- Centralized, computerized and detailed portfolios should be developed to follow students from year to year and from school to school.
- The school system and County government should jointly fund an independent performance review of the school system in the Fiscal Year 2001 Operating Budget.

Source: The Leadership Committee on School Equity Report, 2000.

and human services, recreation programs and libraries, are important to the quality and vitality of County communities. Where there is a need specific to a local area, the agencies providing these services should be actively involved in the community planning process, to help identify and determine options for meeting the need. Some services that are discussed in Chapter 4, *Balanced and Phased Growth*, have particular importance for community conservation. These include the community policing program, programs directed at crime prevention among youth, assistance with home maintenance and home ownership, services that enable elderly residents to “age in place,” human services that are accessible to those who need them and transit services.

## ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.12: Use public infrastructure, buildings and services to enhance older communities.***

- ◆ ***Public Facilities Maintenance and Replacement.*** Develop maintenance and replacement programs to maintain the quality of County public facilities. Use the ten-year Capital Improvement Master Plan to prioritize and schedule maintenance, renovation and replacement to avoid the unnecessary disruption and expense caused by consecutive projects that disturb the same location.
- ◆ ***Community Planning.*** Use community planning to determine how best to enhance each community, through new or improved public infrastructure, facilities and services.
- ◆ ***Public Schools.*** Support the Howard County Public School System in addressing perceptions of public schools that result in some neighborhoods being less desirable to families with children. Encourage the Public School System to implement appropriate recommendations of the Leadership Committee on School Equity.
- ◆ ***Stormwater Management.*** Plan for needed stormwater management in developed areas that lack these facilities or need retrofitting of existing facilities. Seek solutions that enhance natural areas within

existing communities.

- ◆ ***Grant Funding.*** Seek grant funding to provide and improve public infrastructure and restore natural environments within existing communities.
- ◆ ***Public Facilities as Focal Points.*** Seek sites for new or replacement public facilities within or adjacent to commercial centers, when uses will be compatible, to increase the accessibility of public services to the local population. Locate and design public buildings to stress their civic role, for example, use public buildings as landmarks at the intersections of streets or as an edge to a formal public space.

# **Transportation and Community Enhancement**

## **Traffic on Local Roads**

Residents are often concerned about the volume and speed of traffic on neighborhood roadways, especially pass-through traffic. This is perceived as both a safety and quality-of-life issue.

Two approaches are available to reduce inappropriate pass-through traffic. The first approach, which is to provide sufficient capacity on the arterial highway network, deals with the cause of community pass-through traffic. If traffic flows quickly and efficiently on such high volume roadways as US 29, US 40, MD 32 and MD 175, the need for shortcutting through neighborhoods is reduced. This is clearly the preferable method for dealing with this issue.

The second approach is to selectively retrofit community roadways to reduce their attractiveness for pass-through traffic. There are a number of “traffic calming” strategies that may be applied, including narrowing the roadway cross-section, restriping for narrower lanes and encouraging on-street parking. While such strategies may discourage some pass-through traffic, they also inhibit the movement of appropriate local



traffic. Traffic calming as a retrofit strategy in older neighborhoods can be difficult and should only be applied in appropriate situations after considering potential traffic impacts.

## Scenic Roads and Greener Highways

The scenic road policies described in Chapter 3, *Preservation of the Rural West*, also apply to designated scenic roads in the East (Map 5-3 and Box 5-8). The County has regulations intended to help preserve the scenic character of the landscape viewed from these roads and the features of the road right-of-way that contribute to the road's scenic character. However, the regulations to reduce the visual impact of adjacent development have not worked well, and residential development in many instances has had a negative impact on the character of scenic roads.

Preservation of scenic roadways can conflict with the need for safety or capacity-related improvements. These improvements should be restricted to carefully designed spot improvements which retain the scenic qualities of a road. In cases where capacity and safety improvement needs are significant, new road alignments may be needed. Case-by-case review of each of the roads listed in Box 5-8 will determine how potential conflicts between scenic road preservation and traffic safety and efficiency can be best resolved.

Although most of the roads in the County are not designated as scenic roads, the environmental and landscape character of the main State and local roads should not be ignored. The landscape character of main roads should vary with the context, but all should be of the highest possible quality. This requires careful planning to retain natural features, such as woodlands or hedgerows, and to include landscape design that complements the natural areas that remain along key arterials. This landscape design can also benefit wildlife by creating new habitat areas.

To further these goals, the Federal Highway Administration has instituted a Roadside Vegetation Program that endorses energy conscious and environmental practices of sensitive roadside management, such as retaining existing vegetation along roadways and in medians, reducing mowing to promote meadow habitats and planting native vegetation. These principles

### Box 5-8

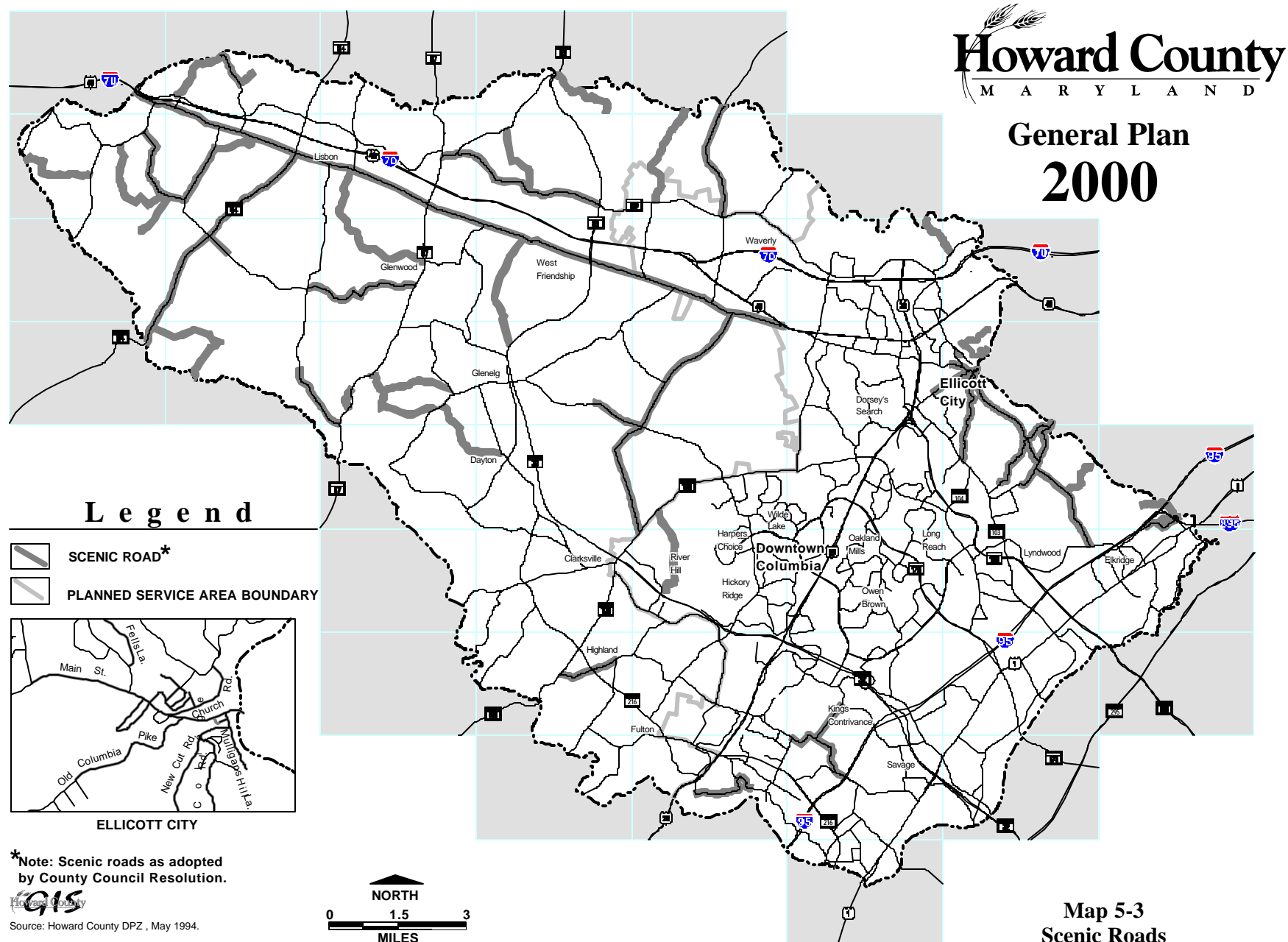
#### Scenic Roads in the East

The following roads, or sections of these roads, are presently of high scenic quality and are part of the County-wide scenic road program.

Beechwood Road	Maryland Avenue
Bonnie Branch Road	Merryman Street
Church Road	Mullican Hill Lane
College Avenue	Murray Hill Road
Court Avenue	New Cut Road
Court Place	Norris Lane
Daniels Road	Old Columbia Pike
Emory Street	Old Lawyers Hill Road
Fells Lane	Park Avenue
Hill Street	Park Drive
Gorman Road	River Road
Harding Road	Rockburn Hill Road
Ilchester Road	St. Paul Street
Landing Road	Sylvan Lane
Lawyers Hill Road	Tiber Alley
Main Street (Ellicott City)	Trotter Road

can be adapted to State highways and County with large rights-of-way. Even within the most intensely developed employment and commercial areas, rights of way and roadside areas should landscaped to demonstrate concern for environmental and landscape quality.

Recently the State Highway Administration unveiled plans to showcase scenic byways in Maryland. Main Street in Ellicott City is included in the Scenic Byways Program because of its location on the National Road, the first Federally funded highway in the United States. Portions of other roads in Howard County are also included in the Scenic Byways Program. The program selects roads not only for their scenic qualities, but also for their historical, cultural and recreational aspects. Federal grants are available to develop management plans and to improve the byways for such items as tourism centers and sign consolidation.



## The Design Character of Local Streets

Subsequent to the 1990 General Plan, the Department of Public Works' Design Manual was amended. Road design standards were revised to reduce right-of-way and paving widths and to permit steeper road grades. These changes were intended to lessen site disturbance, reduce impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff, and make roadways more pedestrian-friendly.

Streets must, of course, be safe and functionally adequate for vehicles, but they should also be designed to recognize human needs. Streets should be designed to keep the driver's attention, make movement easy and enjoyable, and have an underlying order in their layout so that wayfinding is easy. The visual aspects of roads are important. Focal points are helpful for orientation and to establish a sense of place or identity.

Residential design affects the visual quality of streets. Traditionally, the fronts of houses have faced the street to form an attractive edge to the roadway. When houses or townhomes are "backed" onto a street, the private side of the house becomes oriented to noise and traffic. The view of the rear of a house and of a back yard creates a less attractive streetscape than does the more formal front facade. Orienting the back of the house to the road also triggers the need for intensive and costly screens or berms.

Street systems can include a variety of different types of roads. Boulevards and parkways are an underused design approach. The wide landscaped strips between lanes that are common to boulevards and parkways can be used to reduce the visual impact of multiple lanes of traffic. Narrow one-way streets are another way to reduce paving width and reduce or slow through traffic.

In addition to making the roads more pedestrian-friendly, reducing road widths and calming traffic have environmental and circulation benefits. Designing streets as a community amenity means addressing the need for street trees. Trees shade sidewalks and roadways, reduce heat and glare, and provide scale and visual interest. Other elements (lighting, bus stops with seating and trash receptacles), if well-designed, add to the character of the community. Attractive streets are inviting to pedestrians and become

public places for community interaction (Figure 5-10).

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Howard County has an extensive system of facilities for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. Unfortunately, this network does not always provide continuous links between residential neighborhoods and destinations such as employment sites, shopping centers, schools and libraries. Nor do these fa-

**Figure 5-10**  
**Streets as Public Environments**



Many factors combine to make streets public amenities: focal points provide orientation and a sense of identity; wide sidewalks offer space for community interaction; good signage, lighting and trees make streets inviting to pedestrians.

Source: Chesapeake Bay Foundation. A Better Way to Grow, 1996

cilities adequately serve most commuters who want to walk or cycle to rail stations, bus stops or park-and-ride lots. The more extensive the network, the greater the possibility these pedestrian and bicycle paths could be used to provide energy efficient commuting to and from jobs, as well as more recreational travel for visiting and exercise.

Within established communities, residents do not always agree that sidewalks or pathways should be installed. In many instances, the desire by some to provide safe, off-street pedestrian/bicycle connections is countered by others who raise concerns about liability and property rights. To bring order to the decision-making process, the County Administration recently appointed a citizen task force to explore the issues and formulate a policy that would be used to evaluate and prioritize sidewalk extension projects.

## Public Transit

Public transit can enhance the County's neighborhoods, commercial centers and mixed use developments in several ways. Transit provides access to services and stores for those who are beyond comfortable walking distances. Bus service also provides greater mobility to residents, especially the elderly and school-age children. Bus stop amenities, such as shelters, lighting and landscaping, help stimulate and may serve as part of a focal point within a community.

## Policies and Actions

### ***POLICY 5.13: Reduce inappropriate pass-through traffic in residential communities.***

- ◆ ***Arterial Network Capacity.*** Seek to provide adequate capacity on arterial highways to lessen the motivation for pass-through traffic within residential communities.
- ◆ ***Local Road Networks.*** Evaluate and selectively implement traffic calming strategies on a case-by-case basis.

### ***POLICY 5.14: Maintain or enhance the landscape character of roads.***

- ◆ ***Scenic Roads in the East.*** Strengthen requirements for view protection.
- ◆ ***Highway Landscape.*** Work with the State Highway Administration to establish planting and management programs endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration's Roadside Vegetation Program.
- ◆ ***Right-of-Way Landscape Guidelines.*** Establish landscape design guidelines for County rights-of-way that stress protection of existing vegetation and landscape features, and that identify appropriate materials for roadway planting.
- ◆ ***Streetscape.*** Establish design guidelines for streetscape elements such as sidewalk materials, light fixtures, signage and sitting areas at transit stops, to enhance or, where appropriate, reinforce the distinctive character of communities.
- ◆ ***Retrofitting Existing Roads.*** Establish joint public/private programs for streetscape enhancement to create a more consistent and attractive image, especially in strip commercial areas.

### ***POLICY 5.15: Serve community needs for pedestrian/bicycle facilities.***

- ◆ ***Design Manual and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations.*** Review and revise, as appropriate, the Howard County Design Manual and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to ensure that needed connections are incorporated into the plans for both new development and redevelopment projects.
- ◆ ***Pedestrian and bicycle connections.*** Identify and urge construction of missing pedestrian and bicycle linkages that would connect contiguous communities and would connect with other local and regional pedestrian and bicycle paths. Assist in identifying appropriate resources for the needed improvements.
- ◆ ***Community Planning.*** Involve community residents in evaluating the need for and desirability of implementing community sidewalk/pathway improvements. Use established criteria to resolve disagreements.

- ◆ **Retrofitting existing pedestrian and bicycle routes.** Identify existing sidewalks and pathways that need replacement or upgrading. Assist in identifying funding resources.

***POLICY 5.16: Use transit as a means of community enhancement.***

- ◆ **Transit Services.** Explore the feasibility of expanding transit services to make existing commercial areas accessible to those who do not have or wish to use autos, during development of the Transit Development Program.
- ◆ **Transit in Employment and Mixed Use Areas.** Encourage the reservation of space for transit stops and transit transfer points in major employment, mixed use and commercial centers.
- ◆ **Bus Stop Design.** Design bus stops to be wheelchair accessible and to incorporate amenities such as shelters, benches, landscaping and lighting, as appropriate.

## Culture and the Arts

The wide variety of activities collectively discussed under the topic of culture and the arts is important to the quality of life for County residents. [Map 5-4](#) depicts some of the major arts and cultural facilities in the County. As might be expected, Howard County's well-educated, largely professional and relatively affluent population takes an active part in cultural activities and educational programs.

An important factor affecting the cultural and artistic scene in Howard County is the County's location between two major metropolitan centers with a variety of first-rate, long-established cultural institutions. Howard County residents have tended to use the concert halls, theaters, galleries and museums of Baltimore and Washington as their prime cultural resources. However, the artistic and cultural resources of Howard County are more vital to the quality of life in the County than ever before. Today, most households are supported by two incomes and many of the wage earners

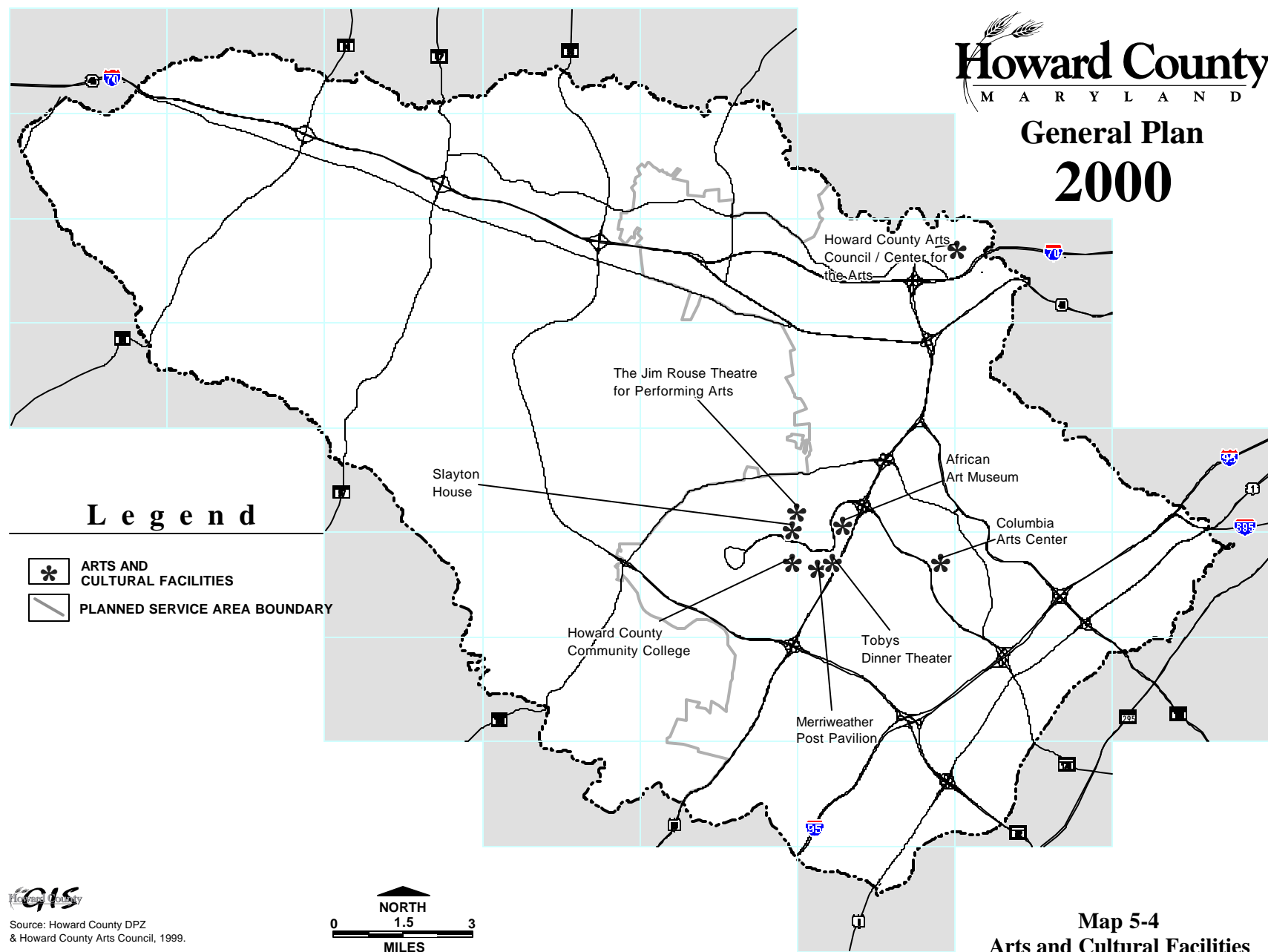
are commuting to Baltimore or Washington to work. Residents are increasingly looking to spend their non-work hours closer to home. In addition, many of Howard County's cultural events and historic sites attract visitors and tourism dollars to the County.

Nonprofit groups present the majority of the dance programs, concerts, plays, readings and art exhibits County residents enjoy. They offer workshops, performances and instruction in the arts for children and adults – making the arts accessible to all Howard Countians. The Columbia Festival of the Arts, begun in 1989, is a major component of cultural life in the County, showcasing local and national performers. Howard County public schools, the Department of Recreation and Parks, Howard Community College and the Columbia Association also provide art and cultural programs.

Nonprofit organizations provide a wide range of programs and services on very modest budgets, relying on the enthusiasm and dedication of volunteers. Many receive support from Howard County through a grant program administered by the Howard County Arts Council. In 1999, arts organizations generated \$2.6 million in revenues. About 21% of the revenues came from corporations, 6% from individuals, 9% from foundations, 7% from Federal and State governments, 9% from Howard County government and the remaining 48% came from earned income sources, such as ticket sales, class fees, rentals and special events.

Since 1990, several important steps have been taken to support the arts. In 1992, the Howard County Arts Council published Arts Vision 2001, a planning document for the arts and culture in Howard County. Four themes – location, space, funding and education – continually recurred in discussions and surveys. As a result, a private/public partnership was established to create the Jim Rouse Theater for Performing Arts at the Wilde Lake High School.

In 1996, the Howard County Center for the Arts (formerly known as the Rockland Arts Center) was renovated. The Center for the Arts now contains visual arts studios, a small theater, gallery spaces for display of artwork and space for solo or group performances. Three resident art groups, 16 visual artists and 15 other art groups have space at the Center.





A 1999 survey of arts groups cited funding, affordable space for exhibitions and performances, office space and rehearsal space as their major issues. The Howard County Arts Council needs additional meeting and office space for local arts organizations, to better coordinate activities, promotions and funding alternatives. In light of these articulated needs, funding constraints and the many groups involved in providing arts and cultural programs, the development of a new Comprehensive Plan for Arts and Culture would be useful. The new Plan could establish facility and program needs, set priorities and identify potential funding sources.

### ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.17: Encourage a wide variety of arts and cultural activities for County residents.***

- ◆ ***Planning for Arts and Culture.*** Assist the Howard County Arts Council, in cooperation with the Columbia Festival of the Arts and other community arts organizations, in developing a Comprehensive Plan for Arts and Culture.
- ◆ ***Regional Financial Support.*** Continue to support regional cultural activities to reflect County residents' use of these activities.
- ◆ ***Local Financial Support.*** Continue to support the Howard County Arts Council and the programs it administers with local government contributions.
- ◆ ***Staff Support and Volunteer Support.*** Support the Arts Council, especially its volunteer workers, by sending government workers for occasional support services and encouraging businesses to act similarly.
- ◆ ***Exhibition Opportunities.*** Encourage the use of public buildings and corporate offices for display of art work in areas easily accessible for public viewing.
- ◆ ***Public/Private Partnerships.*** Encourage private/public partnerships

in support of the arts. Consider offering challenge grants to assist in fund-raising or initiating other partnerships that would increase the availability of affordable exhibition and performance space.

## **Historic Preservation**

Howard County has many historic sites. If properly preserved, these sites can provide neighborhoods with local landmarks, a stronger identity and a sense of rootedness. When numerous historic resources are close together, they can be the basis for revitalization of an entire neighborhood or community, as a distinctive built environment.

Since 1990, the County has taken several steps to protect historic resources. These steps include designating Lawyers Hill as an historic district, with strong support from community residents; producing new design guidelines for both of the County's locally designated historic districts (Ellicott City and Lawyers Hill); enacting property tax credits to assist property owners who renovate or improve historic buildings according to approved guidelines; and creating an inventory of cemeteries and regulations to protect historic cemeteries from disturbance.

The County also added guidelines to the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations for the treatment of historic sites in the subdivision and site development plan review process. However, these guidelines are not in effect until the County Council adopts a list of historic sites to which these guidelines would apply. To date, such a list has not been prepared.

These actions provide some additional assistance to those seeking to preserve historic resources. County property tax credits, enacted in 1995, were approved for work on 22 historic buildings through 1999. The new design guidelines for Ellicott City, completed in 1998, were written to be more specific and more easily understood and interpreted by property owners. However, rapid growth and the lack of adequate protection continue to result in the destruction or degradation of some historic resources and their settings. The loss of landmarks, such as Woodlawn (Papillon Restaurant), Montpelier and Moundland, and the alteration of settings for properties,

such as Temora, demonstrate the vulnerability of historic resources. Outside the two historic districts, Howard County lacks a comprehensive preservation strategy.

The basis for a comprehensive preservation strategy is the Historic Sites Inventory. Howard County has inventoried approximately 640 historic sites (Map 5-5). Much of the County's early inventory, begun in the mid-1970s, is rudimentary and not to current standards. An update is needed to identify historic buildings listed on the inventory that have been demolished or irredeemably altered. An even more important need is identifying and surveying the many historic properties not included on the Historic Sites Inventory. Unless these sites are added to the inventory, they are not eligible for the County's historic preservation property tax credit or for Federal and State income tax credits. In addition to the Historic Sites Inventory, the preparation of an action plan that lists the strengths and weaknesses of historic preservation in the County would be useful in developing a comprehensive preservation strategy. The plan would list historic preservation goals according to their priority, list the actions to be taken to meet the goals and establish criteria for the regular review of all local preservation initiatives.

Updating and expanding the Historic Sites Inventory is a high priority that presents challenges in providing the necessary staffing resources. The County will seek grants from State and Federal programs to assist in these efforts. Obtaining a funding source for historic preservation experts in updating the inventory is encouraged. The County will cooperate with private entities and non-governmental organizations and encourage them to apply for grants that will assist in preserving the County's historic sites generally and updating the Historic Sites Inventory in particular. Possible avenues for updating the Historic Sites Inventory include using qualified volunteer surveyors, graduate students under the direction of qualified professors, or temporary or consulting staff.

County-owned historic properties should all be placed under the jurisdiction of one department, such as the Department of Recreation and Parks, since they already oversee several historic properties. Adequate funding needs to be provided to preserve these properties. To supplement County

funds, grants should be sought that could provide additional resources to protect and restore these properties. Furthermore, the County should actively seek economically viable uses to occupy these properties. These uses could help defray the cost of the properties' upkeep.

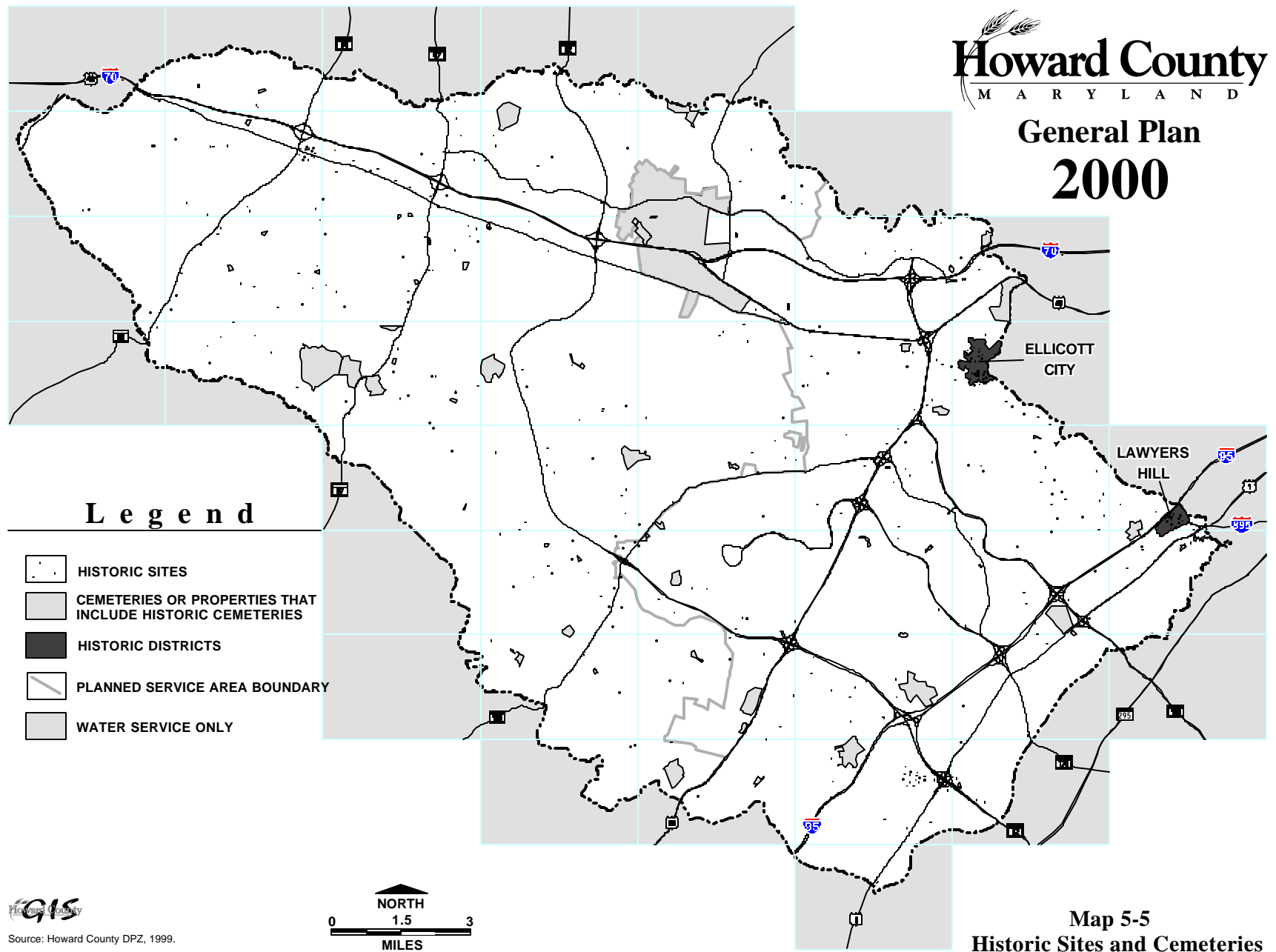
Because the Historic District Commission's jurisdiction covers the exterior appearance of structures but does not supersede the Zoning Regulations, conflicts may arise when the Commission believes that proposed development, which meets zoning requirements, does not fit the character of the historic district. To strengthen the protection the historic district designation gives to an area, it may be prudent to periodically evaluate both the Zoning Regulations and the regulations governing the Historic District Commission.

The success of preservation and the adaptive use of historic resources within Ellicott City demonstrates how well concerted historic preservation planning can work as a means of community revitalization and enhancement, and as the context for a successful mixed use environment. There is a need to strengthen residents' understanding of the County's history in order to build pride in the County's heritage and support for historic preservation. This can be done most effectively by improving coordination among County agencies and nonprofit historic organizations, and by using Federal and State grant programs.

## ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.18: Establish a comprehensive County-wide historic preservation program.***

- ◆ ***Official Inventory of Resources.*** Give high priority to reviewing, expanding and updating the Historic Sites Inventory; to implementing existing guidelines in the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations related to historic sites; and to ensuring that all significant historic sites qualify for the Historic Preservation Property Tax Credit Program. Document and evaluate special resources, such as vernacular and other significant architecture, historic cemeteries, archeological sites and historic landscapes.



- ◆ **Historic Preservation Plan.** Draft an action plan that details the strengths and weaknesses of historic preservation in the County, lists and prioritizes local historic preservation goals, and clearly states actions the County will take to reach those goals.
- ◆ **Loss of Resources.** Prevent loss of historic resources from “demolition by neglect” by encouraging use of the existing Federal, State and County tax credit programs and informing owners of special exception uses for historic properties that may provide an economically viable use for the property.
- ◆ **Protection of County-Owned Historic Resources.** Protect County-owned historic properties and maximize their potential by placing all such properties under the jurisdiction of a single department, such as the Department of Recreation and Parks. Provide adequate funds and seek grants to preserve these properties. Select economically viable uses for the properties that promote their historical integrity.
- ◆ **Assistance to Owners.** Expand public outreach initiatives about Federal, State and County tax credit programs for historic sites. Provide information on financial assistance and technical matters to owners of historic resources to encourage improvements that do not impair the historic integrity of these resources.
- ◆ **Development Impacts.** Adopt a list of properties from the Historic Sites Inventory that have additional development potential and should be subject to the historic sites guidelines of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Establish subdivision and site planning guidelines to protect historic resources when nearby, off-site development could adversely impact historic properties.
- ◆ **Property Tax Credits.** Support amendments to the State enabling legislation for property tax credits that would increase the potential value of tax credits and would allow credits for certain interior improvements.
- ◆ **Historic Districts.** Assist local communities wishing to establish or expand County, State or national historic districts or easements.

- ◆ **Historic District Commission.** Review and evaluate on a regular basis the regulations governing the Historic District Commission.
- ◆ **Broadening of Participation.** Coordinate County historic preservation initiatives and programs with State and Federal programs, and with historic preservation and interpretative programs of local non-profit organizations.
- ◆ **Coordination with Other Community Enhancement Programs.** Incorporate historic preservation goals into Community Master Plans and Community Conservation Committee initiatives.

## Community Planning

### Community Planning Program

During the life of this General Plan, community planning will be a prime concern of County government. Community planning will allow the County to work with residents and businesses to monitor trends, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make needed interventions in small areas of the County. Past General Plans looked at specific communities or redevelopment issues as the need arose. In the future, sustaining and enhancing existing communities will be a more pressing and ongoing concern.

Community plans can be the bridge between such General Plan goals as well-maintained housing, environmental protection and high-quality built environments, and their application within specific neighborhoods. Community plans also provide a context for the review of subdivision or site plans to see how well they serve the needs of the larger local community or fit into the wider environmental and landscape setting. Conversely, community planning can enable people to relate their most immediate concerns to a context larger than their particular street or subdivision. Community planning can establish a shared understanding about community concerns and goals that will enable residents to participate more effectively in land use decisions, the budget process and other actions affecting their community.

A community planning program should be established upon adoption of this General Plan. Three different types of planning activities are appropriate to meet the needs of different parts of the County:

1. **Corridor Revitalization Studies.** The initial target area will be Route 1, but redevelopment plans are also needed for Route 40 and for some areas that include older commercial centers or business parks. Planning will be comprehensive in nature and might include proposals for rezoning, designation of infill and redevelopment opportunities, identification of renovation and redevelopment incentives, improvement of the natural environment and commitment for public and private investments in infrastructure.
2. **Community Master Plans.** Plans will be developed for communities that need a comprehensive conservation strategy. These communities may contain aging housing and infrastructure or have public facilities that need maintenance or renovation. They may suffer from environmental degradation or possess areas with potential for infill development or redevelopment. Addressing concerns about school performance, public safety, recreational facilities and other community services may be important in some areas. These areas may need reinvestment or expanded services to revitalize the community.
3. **Community Conservation Committees.** Many communities may not want a comprehensive Community Master Plan, but may be interested in ensuring that their neighborhood remains healthy and attractive by undertaking specific revitalization or enhancement projects. Community Conservation Committees will provide a flexible way for the County and community members to work together to identify and address specific means of undertaking Community Conservation programs. Ideally, Community Conservation programs will be ongoing, formalized, broad-based efforts whose focus is maintaining quality, desirable communities. Key activities include: a community priority setting process, continuous monitoring of the natural aging of public infrastructure and private business and residential properties, support for “community-spirit building” activities, and preventive actions to address emerging problems and issues identified

by the community. To provide communities access to the information and to the tools and support necessary to achieve these objectives, regular interaction with senior-level County personnel and other organizational and business decision-makers is required. Good models for community conservation are the Village Revitalization Committees that formed initially in the Villages of Wilde Lake and Harpers Choice. Each Village Revitalization Committee provides strong oversight to subcommittee work groups that are action-oriented and have been very successful in accomplishing many enhancement projects in a short period of time.

Some communities may be interested in specific enhancement projects. Community Conservation Committees can also be a means for the County to help communities address their needs for specific improvements to enhance the quality of their physical environment. Enhancement programs might include a community clean up campaign, the construction of sidewalks or pathways, the planting of street trees or stream buffers, and the renovation or construction of play areas or community gathering places. Good examples for community enhancement programs are the traffic advisory committees that have worked with the Department of Public Works and the community participation policies now in place for determining the appropriateness of traffic calming devices, street lights and sidewalk linkages.

Local area plans were completed in the late 1970s and early 1980s for Ellicott City, Guilford, Elkridge and North Laurel-Savage. The Elkridge plan was updated by a study of revitalization potential for Route 1 and lower Elkridge in 1990, but the others have not been updated. Implementation of these plans often lagged and recommendations were often carried out in an uncoordinated fashion. One reason for this was that community planning was not a well-established function of the County government. Therefore, sustained channels for monitoring implementation and for local community communication with planning staff were lacking.

Many changes have occurred in these areas of the County since the current plans were written. The changes have, in many cases, been positive, result-

ing in renovated buildings and historic resources, new public facilities and increasingly vibrant commercial areas. Nevertheless, the plans for these areas are increasingly out-of-date, and new issues call for updates of these plans. As the County establishes an ongoing community planning function, these plan updates should also result in sustained communication with local community organizations.

Boundaries for these and other communities will need to be established to define the limits of community plans. Boundaries can be natural or built features; highways, stream valleys, wooded areas or large institutions can all provide a definable edge. Government-defined boundaries such as census tracts, zoning districts, elementary school districts, statistical areas or historic districts may be helpful, but are often artificial. Frequently, community associations have defined their boundaries in their by-laws. Thus, researching the boundaries of several contiguous associations may be useful in delineating community boundaries.

For example, boundaries for the Route 40 Corridor Revitalization Study area might extend from Patapsco Valley State Park west to the MD 144 intersection. The study's primary focus is expected to be on commercial uses along the road and on the transition area between commercial and residential uses. The study's goals would be to ensure compatibility between the uses, to address needed buffers and to look at visual, noise, lighting and other influences along the road.

Although Howard County is a relatively small jurisdiction, the character and needs of its communities are varied. To respond to these variations, the County's community planning program needs to be flexible in defining:

1. **The County's role.** For Community Master Plans and Corridor Revitalization Studies, the Department of Planning and Zoning staff will coordinate the planning process and develop the plan with necessary support, input and direction from representatives of diverse interests. Another option is for Community Conservation Committees to be more proactive in development of enhancement programs, with information and advice provided by County staff. For ongoing community revitalization initiatives, the Columbia Revitalization Planning Committee provides an excellent model for County involvement. County

department heads and other appropriate County personnel meet regularly with leaders of community organizations and business decision-makers to identify issues and achieve community priority objectives.

2. **Scope of study.** All Community Master Plans do not need to address the same topics. Some communities will have a wider range of issues to be addressed than others.
3. **Recommended strategies or actions.** Strategies to address each community's issues will vary depending on the resources found within the community. Communities have economic, organizational, social, environmental, historic and other resources that can provide unique opportunities for community conservation and enhancement.

## **Participation in Community Planning**

Effective community planning requires active and sustained participation by those who have a stake in the local community. Stakeholders can include government agencies, residents, businesses, property owners, local institutions and community organizations.

Most properties in local communities are privately owned, and most decisions regarding use and investment are made by the property owners. Attractive, livable communities require commitments from property owners who maintain, renovate and improve their properties, and take an interest in the community. The active participation of community organizations is also important, to provide a forum for expressing community concerns and goals, to organize community participation and to provide a contact point for the County. Communities are also affected by the decisions of financial institutions, homeowners associations, major businesses/employers and other stakeholders, including places of worship, local recreation associations and environmental groups.

Planning teams for development of Corridor Revitalization Studies and Community Master Plans need to be involved throughout the planning process. They should participate in defining a work program that clearly describes how the specific plan will be developed, in preparing flexible, ac-



tion-oriented community plans that can be revised and updated as needed, and in enlisting the energy and resources of diverse stakeholders in plan implementation.

To ensure effective and timely implementation of priority projects the County needs to review and streamline its project implementation process. The goals are to streamline individual steps and to set up internal tracking and communications procedures among the various departments that are likely to be involved. Community planners should monitor the major projects and periodically report progress to keep citizens informed, especially on long-term projects.

## ***Policies and Actions***

***POLICY 5.19: Establish an effective, inclusive community planning process.***

- ◆ ***Pilot Project.*** Use the Route 1 Corridor Revitalization Study as a pilot project to develop and test the community planning process.
- ◆ ***Community Needs.*** Identify areas of the County that would benefit from development of a Community Master Plan, a Corridor Revitalization Study or a more focused community conservation program.
- ◆ ***Priorities for New Community Master Plans and Community Conservation Committees.*** Establish criteria for selection of areas that will receive priority for development of Community Master Plans and for formation of new Community Conservation Committees. Consider the areas' needs for a comprehensive versus a focused approach to issues of property maintenance, land use, public facilities, neighborhood viability and quality of life. Consider economic revitalization goals and especially the community's willingness to participate in and support planning and implementation; without the community's willingness to participate, the community planning process cannot proceed.
- ◆ ***Update Existing Community Master Plans.*** Work with stakeholders

to update existing plans for Ellicott City, Elkridge, North Laurel-Savage and Guilford.

- ◆ ***Support Existing Community Conservation Committees.*** Continue to involve County department heads, other appropriate County personnel, community stakeholders and business decision-makers in existing, ongoing Community Conservation programs to achieve priority objectives.
- ◆ ***Coordinate Programs.*** Emphasize community conservation and enhancement benefits in all new programs or initiatives regarding historic preservation, commercial development or redevelopment, mixed use opportunities, and revision of both the Zoning and the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations.

***POLICY 5.20: Improve communication between citizens and County agencies and encourage active, sustained public participation.***

- ◆ ***Public Involvement.*** Establish planning teams consisting of residents, business owners, community and nonprofit organizations, and pertinent agencies to assist in developing and implementing Community Master Plans and Corridor Revitalization Studies.
- ◆ ***Community Self-Help.*** Offer assistance to local community groups to develop self-directed community enhancement initiatives.
- ◆ ***Monitoring Implementation.*** Establish mechanisms to provide feedback on implementation and results of Community Master Plans. Encourage continuing involvement of the planning team and other stakeholders.

## **Summary Map**

Map 5-6, Summary Map – Community Conservation and Enhancement, summarizes some of the policies and actions described in this chapter.



